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of the performance

July 1977 \$1.95

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Mr. Harlechian (an editor)	Mr. J. H. Wilson.....	Mr. Blackett (a metaphysician)	Mr. Lazarus
Mr. Coddle (a student)	Mr. Macready.....	Carteau (Merryweather's butler)	Mr. Hassell
Blacker (Merryweather's footman)		Mr. Davies.....	
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COLLINGWOOD BAND

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Tramp	Miss Liane	Emily	Miss Maria Dunn
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J. B. PHILP, His Son.



Theatre

July 1977
Volume 2 Number 3

Australia

Departments

- 1 Comment
- 3 Quirks and Queries
- 7 Gaude: Theatre, Opera, Dance
- 5 Letters
- 24 Whispers, Rumours and Facts
- 46 International Theatre Institute

Features

- 8 *Kangaroo Festival*
- 10 Peter Kenna on the 'good old days'
- 14 *The Host and the Guest*
- 16 John Gaden talks to Robert Page
- 17 *The Tasmania Puppet Theatre*
- 19 Loral Thompson
- 22 *The Awards*
- 23 *The Playwrights' Conference*
- 24 Russell Wherrett reports
- 26 *The Human Factor*
- 28 David Marr on the Elizabethan Theater Trust
- 31 Post-Cyclone Theatre
- 32 Darwin theatre after Tracy
- 33 *The Crystal Palace*
- 34 New life for Perth theatre

Playscript

- 35 *The Full Guy: Act Two*
- 42 Mark Rodgers's Director's Handbook

International

- 66 U.S.A.

Studyguide

- 68 Don Read on Price
- 69 *Ronald's A Hand Guide*

Theatre Reviews

- 36 New South Wales
- 37 *Going Home*
- 38 *The Caliphate*
- 39 *Mosko*
- 40 *A Chorus Line*
- 41 *Unpredictable Act*
- 42 *Puppets and Performances*
- 43 A.C.T.
- 44 *Three Sisters*
- 45 *Anticipation*
- 47 Queensland
- 48 *The Last of the Knobkickers*
- 49 *Absurd and Blither*
- 50 Western Australia
- 51 Tasmania
- 52 *Gatherings Engaged*
- 53 Victoria
- 54 *The Club*
- 55 *Fernridge News*
- 56 *The Interview and Oscar Wilde*
- 57 South Australia
- 58 *Four Plays*
- 59 *Jazz Rock*
- 60 *All My Sons*

Ballet

- 61 William Shakespeare

Opera

- 73 David Gergo

Films

- 72 Elizabeth Reddell

Books

- 73 Roger Cottrell
- 74 Hein van der Poorten
- 75 Raymond Stanley

Theatre Nostalgia

left: A theatre handbill of 1863 promises a night of diverse theatrical pleasures.

COMMENT

The two bigger events this year will be a one day meeting of historians, writers and emerging practitioners of *A Chinese Love*, and the annual *Assassination National Storytelling Conference*, where new writers have the chance to meet and work on their plays in workshop with top actors and directors. One of the activities there will be a competition in micromanagement. They have given the APNG five per cent and are going to be theatre of the year.

4 Chews Law has had one of the most enthusiastic poor responses of any musical for us. Though the musical audience may wonder where the glittering instances were for the first four and a bit, and the media moguls may complain about the advertising mystery, there's no doubt about it, they've done it. Australian audiences have made a show as professional as any in the world during a recession — despite rumours of May rumours that of course they'd never be able to cope with such complex overseas choreography. The greatest achievement of all, though, is perhaps the fact that today and tomorrow are selling in red hundreds of thousands of dollars worth bringing this show which has ensured world wide importance to Australia with an Australian cast. Rehearsing in the theatre can result in almost failure or nothing more, unless, at least, it is only some patchy success. Of those success musical theatre has very few, and this.

Ingraham's second lecture received a unanimous response from the ANPC; at the time of The Goodfellow Rock, it was a rock open about the rocks of the Australian rock provinces in the South West, the place that dropped the bomb on Hiroshima. Radio Railway Links, Western, East, Melbourne and Christies Diamond Bay showed and sold them there was through the rock, showing and describing the glimmering veins without cost, comment or charge. It is the ability to give an airing to this sort of original Australian work that makes the conference a major force in the industry. This year the Australian Council featured back any funding for it at all on the first application, and other state governments gave a small research grant. The ANPC should, and would, hopefully be entirely self-sufficient, but until such time as it can be, it must receive funding as a self-sufficient solid institution.

The conference has probably at least broken even this year — thanks in part to the success and efficient administration of Bill Stansell of the Old State — and the support it has received from many sources has encouraged the committee to work towards the A&P becoming a permanent and year round business (as well as the annual meeting) working for physicians, perhaps as a private agency, with their compensation and for our Association, at whatever rate it can. It has started to do this by making several inquiries along these lines, for which it will be consulting with the appropriate people.

Several of the resolutions made by the protagonists and observers attending, related to having the trustees themselves could hold not less than all their allotted capital, rather than receiving such other sums in excess of money. This being, up off a bond for interests, in favour of up off a few Australian worthies, from such trustees paying as their per cent royalties on all oil and gas right royalties. It was also suggested that they hold together and agree only to pay a fixed per cent royalty, taking all the overheads, English lawyers in particular not asking a great deal more, and if anyone should be removing high royalties it is Australian writers who will not be taking the money, not all the directors. Again on the subject of exports, it was agreed that the confederates should tell all these companies to restrain their bringing in of certain directors and officers in case trials were held and the Australian Council and other funding bodies not be forced than that of imposed directors and partnerships. In reference to the latter companies the funding agreement will be issued to mark a specific amount they will have to be paid in preexisting Australian plague.

An addition to the committee this year was a film and TV school working in the interest of the local TV stations. This appeared to be successful, but had problems negotiating with the financial side of the operation. Perhaps this is symptomatic of the influences in general, and the resolution passed on the matter was that TV and film producers should try to use cameras to keep the local stations and not turn to an coverage agreement between the two media. There was a strong feeling too, that regional TV stations should be encouraged to studio diverse locally and could be helped a lot by other community stations locally. Rachel Wilson gave the acting director's review of the 1972 performance.

A good many theater critics attended the last weekend of the Playwrights' Conference and one of the most discussed was that of super liability in critics and how far it could be reduced, arising from the correspondence which now appears in the *Letters page*.

Andy Worrell (not this month's cover) says what he thinks the APPC does for Australia (p. 2), and several writers (Ben Ayres, 1997; John Geddes) explain why it is necessary to leave Australia for a time and return forever (not in himself).

All the National Professional Theatre Awards winners for 1976 following the announcement at the end of May in Cambridge, appear on page 18. Were they the same ones picked?

Three

Editor Robert Page
Executive Editor Lucy Wagner
**Assistant Editors Brian Ruppert,
Andrea Joyce Dorey**

• 100 •

John Hall, Cromie Marshall, Diane Bragg,
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97 QUOTES & QUERIES



SYMPATHY ESTABLISHED

JACOB WATSON, actress. "I don't care what John Osborne says, the Playwrights' Conference is useful. It can't help but be valuable for all concerned — writers obviously, but actors, directors and observers too. I think something I've learned from it is sympathy. I've talked to a lot of people whom I otherwise never would. It's a great leveller, with everyone being together for two weeks in the university hall. It has suddenly made me realize, too, that people like Richard [Wherlock] and myself have become established figures, and younger actors and directors are talking to us in the same situation as we used to do."

"I've now been in the business 15 years — since I was 15 — and I've never been out of work or had to get another job. I mean myself acting always. I don't want to drown. And if I have to work, and I always have had to, that's the best thing for me."

"The next thing is, of course, *Playright* at the Tote, which is a wonderful play. I've never wanted to play one of the women, never felt I'm the type, but Dulcie is so awful. I will have to understand her, feel for her, and make her audience very visible — probably lots of people in the audience will be just like her!"

WE'LL DO IT

LEVENIE BLANDFORD, Sheep Productions. "We open on 1 July with *Bogeyman Franklin*, which should provide us with worth raising capital. At the same time we're going to start a late-night show, the new *Broadsheet*, AC/DC Williams's play, *Macbeth's Last Half Hour*, and produce shorts, perhaps with Peter Corcoran. We hope to put on Reka Hartmann's play *Desire Oil*, which I was very impressed with at the Playwrights' Conference. We

have funding from the Victorian Arts Ministry for the venue, three years' lease of Melbourne Playbox Theatre, and applications everywhere for further funding grants.

We plan, too, to be doing regular workshop readings along the lines of the Playwrights' Conference, as a two-weekly event for the public. The Age newspaper may be continuing on this. Other things will be reader performances, theatre groups at off-times, performances of Berg or Brecht/Weill songs, informal revues like at night, changing circuses and writers' constantly. And children's theatre. You name it!

WIDER AUDIENCES FOR WORKSHOPS

MICHAEL EMLAND, Bondi Pavilion Theatre. "It seems a good idea that the work done at the National Playwrights' Conference should be given by an audience outside the confines of the audience who would be in awareness of the latest needs in Australian playwriting."

"The Bondi Pavilion Theatre will act as the host for a number of the plays workshopped at the conference for a short demonstration season beginning in late June. As many of the original casts are unavailable at the moment, details will be widely publicized."

DON'T MAKE A VAIN MATE

John Taylor will be directing *Don't Make A Vain Mate*, Made by Kenneth Ross, going on at June Street, Sydney, in July. The play was workshopped at the Playwrights' Conference and had a short run at the Spur, Adelaide, in June.

JOHN TAKKE. "The myth of Australia as a land of rugged individualism is a long time dying despite everything good that this country is confirmed to a degree where individualism, the conformists, and even the eccentric is viewed with hostile suspicion.



"In *Don't Make A Vain Mate*, the protagonist's refusal to pass a smile socializes in simply a catalyst setting his fellow workers and family against a man who insists on making his own

decisions on his own life."

"To set the play up about 'unruthing' is to avoid the major issues Kenneth Ross has raised. At first reading, the unruthing aspect struck me most — I think all characters and actors tend to see the problems of a play first — but, on re-reading, I find it is an important play, as it is dealing with bigger issues than any Australian playwright has tackled recently."

"It is the individual against society, a questions maturing and the family structure."

"The older Australia of the main character is contrasted with the younger conformists who are trapped in their conformism. They can't take stands because of the way of life they have been taught to lead, the quota established in Australia's institutions at present is 'Don't Make Waves'. But all the characters are clearly sympathetic. A woman often does have to suffer for her basic actions — look at *Julia* again."

REVIEWING OR PERTH

WILTON MONLEY, managing director, Parachute Productions. "While we have really done a bit to take on an old 1900-style Perth theatre which used to be a cinema where Dorothy Hewitt's father put on shows [See "The Crystal Palace Starts a New Life" in this issue of *Theatre Australia*

"Since *Tony Best* and *Requiem*, Franklin have been whacking success, among other reasons, partly because Salvo's where the Royal Guards, is a truly superb a bit like *La Bohème* in Sydney, and also because my partners in this, Internation, are rock promoters and they can attract a lot of young people (though *Requiem* attracts young people anyway).

"Now we find we're running up against the same problem that J.C. Williamson's did, the difficulty of keeping the theatre going with shows. Most shows are large-scale, and therefore too expensive. If you don't get one-handers or two-handers, I don't know what you do. I'm planning to mount some shows at the Royal and then take them on tour. I hope to do that with *John Frost*, *George, George* and *Requiem* this September.

"I think Perth people would respond very well to that, they're just like people everywhere, but they always get everything about three years late. *Karen Brookfield* is

also interested in the voice and would like to bring over anything tangible he has.

PERFORMING COMPANIES

ROB HILLIN, Australian Performing Groups: "We see it as deterioration of the product — very much the kind of thing that was talked about in the Industrial Assistance Commission report. We're hoping for a wider audience for theatre music, or rock circus, which is what *Scrap Box Circus* is."

"We've taken an aggressive stand on the contract of their record released under the old APR Records on 4 June, and so will get a much better return than the usual five per cent royalties. We are taking a finance call risk, but the response so far has been very good."

"That's just a start. Also in the sound field we're doing a radio series called *Domestic Contradictions* for ABC and a *High Fives* Show for them too. I don't know what else will come out of that in the way of records or whatever."

"We're making a film of *Dumbheads*, and are negotiating with two TV channels about its national airing. The film we have to decide who will do it best — the product has to be really good. It's a question of maximizing response and audiences."

DEAD END?

SHERE MORRIS, director (who has recently returned to Purich from the East 17 Drama School in London) and a now temporarily listing in WAIT: "New York was basically alive. I saw some very interesting, exciting new work by very young directors and writers — especially the work of two writers, David Rabe and Chris Durang. Durang had a letter, cast and fairly plug on the theme of the Victimization of New Jersey Seafarers."

"But London — sad, dead. Something new outside The Royal Court, The West End is everywhere. The only visibility there is in the work of various ensemble players. The multi-national tape National was as boring as hell, a nice building, but otherwise boring."

"I'm convinced that small companies and the development of small company groups is the way theatre is going and that only may it well remain viable in Britain."

ARMIDALE ENTREPRENEUR

DENNIS BHAGNIS: The Armidale Theatre Project sponsored by the Old Time Theatre Company and the Australian Theatre for Young People has been operating since February, although little or none of its activities has appeared in the media. A fully professional company — six actors, a director and a manager — based in Armidale across the New England and the NW North-East region with plays, workshops and seminars.

"If the production of *Officer Ordnance*



15 May at the Drama Theatre of the University of New England in anything to go by, the company is doing work of high quality. With a troupe of just three women, five men — one of them manager John Bawden — and an almost bare stage in our wall of grey-painted flats with two downstage doors, Raymond Grindin achieved an electrifying version of the play noteworthy for its unaffected and forth attention to Shakespeare's verse."

"Our hopes for the project will succeed — the company is constantly refining the Armidale region fine professional theatre as part of its share of the cultural industry."

RESOLVING PROBLEMS

CHRISTINE D'ESTERNO, Singing Consultant: "I started Singing Consultants because I've been around for 12 years as a stage producer and director and there has always been an incredible lack of this area. And since J.C. Williamson left Sydney there has been nowhere even to hear future pros."

"We will solve any problems, from a photo call up when a particular prop or article can be located, to supplying the set and props for an entire production. We have a pool of 30 technicians in all fields whom I can call on. If you require building, we will hire workshop space and knock down as overheads."

"We're starting with very little and building up as the jobs come in. Singing Consultants will also act as an agency for techniques, which is a very new thing in theatre, though there is already one for film people."

"I have worked for the MTC, Neutral Bay, Marion Street, Independent, Alpha Children's Theatre and Canberra Rep, and I hope to be working closely with all the theatre companies."

"Ours should be an consultancy approach because I've also just spent six months observing staging and lighting techniques in US theatres, and much of this is quite new to Australia."

"And I'm used to working on all sorts of ranges of budgets!"

DESIGNING FOR FRED

WENDY DICKSON, designer (winner of the Best Designer award and art director

of The Chair of Justice: Blacksmith): "I haven't actually started working yet, apart from research. We're still location hunting."

"We've been driving around New South Wales in the Jetta Camper van, but we've been rather held up by floods."

"Of course it's very exciting to be working with Fred Schepisi on such a major film — and as a huge I think there are 60 locations, it will probably over 17 weeks with a pretty large cast — thirty black. It is a period film — 1900 — but not necessarily so. Fred wants us to be more documentary in style, just cutting in on people's lives."

"In the past I've designed both sets and costumes, which is very tiring, but Wendy Fitzgerald will be the costume designer, though we work very closely."

"There is a lot of difference between designing for the stage and for film, and I've only recently been able to exploit the difference. The camera selects in film, so, as a designer you can't make such a complete statement, and you don't have any advance control over interpretation. Film has to be realistic, but you can't be much more detailed."

"Each has its own appeal. I like the constraint of working in theatre, and the greater physical size of film. It's much the same relationship with the actors, though perhaps you are more able to change or manipulate them in film."

WELCOME BACK

ERIK DUGGAN, Music Left Theatre Consultant: "The Oberon Boxes Show will be a welcome-back to town for Oberon Boxes. We started in 1965 at the Philip Street Theatre — the show was called *A Cuppa Tea, a Bit and a Good Lie Down* — and it ran for 14 months between Sydney and Melbourne."

"It's nice that she will be back with William Ono again. The show opens at the end of July and will run until January. I think it will be a great success."

EXTRAORDINARY ITEMS

DANIEL COOMBE, director of *Justitia*, Australian Opera: "On the second-last page of the Australian Opera's annual report for 1976 is one heading 'Extraordinary Items' states that the AO has had to write off \$200,000 paid to it by the Australian Council since 1971, which related to a subsidy shortly arising from a change in funding by the council from a financial year ending 30 June to a calendar year basis."

"The Opera has also had to increase its production budget of required funding to the Trust, which has had to recruit 12 people to pay throughout the season instead a grant deal of money, but we can't possibly allow the drop in artistic standards that would otherwise occur."

LETTERS

CRITICS CRITICISED

The director of the Melbourne Theatre Company, John Sumner, has written to the editor of *Theatre Australia* Robert Page, querying the impartiality of some of the printed reviews.

Correspondence between Mr Sumner and Mr Page is published here. A letter from Garry Hutchison to Mr Sumner is also included. Mr Hutchison is one of the critics Mr Sumner mentioned.

18th May, 1977

The Editor,
"Theatre Australia"

Dear Sir,

Your current policy of appointing critics affiliated with particular theatre companies to assess the productions of rival companies in the same city seems to me an unfair and officially unsound procedure.

We ask that reviewers of Melbourne Theatre Company productions should be impartial journalists, with no theatrical allegiances, and we look forward to hearing of your future choice in this matter.

Yours faithfully
John Sumner,
Director,
Melbourne Theatre Company

24th May, 1977

Mr John Sumner,
Director,
Melbourne Theatre Company.

Dear Mr Sumner,

Thank you for your letter of 18th May concerning upon what you interpret, I think wrongly, as our policy in respect of our appointed critics.

We have four critics in Melbourne. Mr Raymond Stankay — theatre writer and journalist (*The Stage and Screen*) though one not "impartial" but with considerable predilections, I don't think I do have any difficulty in saying that by and large he is not the A.P.C.'s way-of-thinking.

Mr Suzanne Spenser — theatre critic *Melbourne Times* and C.A.E. lecturer. I don't see a preference for the La Mama style.

Mr Jack Hibbard — according to our information no longer "affiliated" with

the A.P.C. A contentious choice, as he is a playwright/actor of that, later, and adopts a fairly cynical tone when reviewing.

Mr Garry Hutchison — theatre critic for *The Australian* (for much other such work, press advertising man and part of the management structure of Blooms Productions).

Reviewing this line, then, I can find only one of our critics to be presently "affiliated" with (a) particular theatre company? That involvement occurs so far as I have engaged him in the depiction of one play at Gram Street. Has the singular obligation to his been noted with *The Australian*?

On the one hand, I find little evidence (and certainly no intent) of a "covert policy" of appointing critics with affiliations to particular theatre companies, and on the other hand, would refine, in particular cases, as is restrained from the use of people acquainted with, even fervently concerned with, the theatre in a vain attempt solely to employ "impartial" journalists?

So far this year Mr Hibbard has review'd *The School for Scandal* and *The Game of Love and Chance*, Mr Hutchison *Order Town* and *The Fall Guy*, Katharine Hepburn *The Doll* trilogy, and Mr Stankay *Jane and the Phoenix*. This I take to be a healthy mix of repertoires in the M.T.C., and probably more varied than any other theatre company has enjoyed.

In *The Sydney Morning Herald* Arts Editor of the *National Times*, to be debarred from writing criticism because of his recent production for (and continuing interest in) S.U.D.S. which was "universally" presented at the Seymour Centre? Or is Mr Cromphill to be silenced for his affiliation to *Heggs in Jumps* with the National, the T.T. and N.I.B.A.?

And what of Mr Buchanan's affiliations with her stable of writers at *Lantony Press*? Is *Theatrical Australia's* best critic never to fit in a program because of that?

You refer only to connections with theatre companies but a stronger case may be made about writers, such as Mr Hibbard (and, elsewhere, Mr Ross, Mr Hewitt, Mr Blair and unold members of others who are not so well known), but if such an argument prevailed, then Mr

Radio, for one, would have to resign his position on *The Age*. Indeed, we are concerned about the possible ethical questions that the right man and Mr Hibbard (possibly compromised) in reverse *The Club* only if his response is positive, with Mr Hutchinson ready to step into the breach if it is not. Why (though this is not your question) is Mr Hibbard so do it at all? The answer, then, is that craftsmen are the best judges of other craftsmen's work. Craftsmen in trades, educational establishments and area dog shows are not impartial writers.

I might add that Steve Geach (writer), Charles Marowitz (writer and director), Alan Seymour (writer and producer) and Martin Evans (radio producer), to name just a few that spring immediately to mind, write, or have written, for *Theatre and Places*.

The argument, then, for finding people with "no theatrical allegiances" comes to me and officially implement what is now, damaging to the standards of theatre criticism and writing in general if it were.

Further, I find your remark in relation to other companies as "real" at best and at worst potentially offensive. My concern is that emphasis in this is the nature of criticism has wronging through because of vested interest, over honest response. Such an implication would seem to be endorsed by your remark that "our president" (which I have already disposed as being such) is "ethically unsoiled".

I must simply say that our critics are appointed wholly with regard to their ability (in our opinion and relating to others available) to give an in-depth, considered and articulate response to what they see at the theatre. That they take with them certain predilections is unavoidable but is a part of human nature, not "affiliation".

If there are any specific instances of this latter not being the case, in or otherwise because of vested interest (long-standing, over-honest response) then I would be pleased to consider them and on such grounds a critic would be dismissed. Otherwise our free policy remains as it is.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to make this policy clear.

Yours sincerely,
Robert Page,
Editor,
Theatre Australia

LETTERS

Mr Robert Page,
Theatre Australia

Dear Mr Page,

In reply to your letter of 24th May

Our objection to your views of critics relate to those people directly connected with the management of companies. We do not object to critics in any field (category) as playwrights, publishers, actors or play directors, provided they have no possible vested interest in the success or failure of the productions they are criticizing. Admittedly, sometimes this is a delicate field of choice, but a generally impartial viewpoint ought to be the貫點of a decently balanced, in my case of death.

At the time of Jack Hibberd writing the critique of *The School for Scandal* and *The Game of Love and Chess*, he was definitely connected with the running of the Picnic Factory. We have seen no formal announcement of his having severed his connections with that organization, so far as this, we must assume that his commitment to the group continues.

Carrie Hutchinson likewise, is definitely connected with the management of Melbourne Productions. Therefore we consider that Carrie continuing to act as a critic of other Melbourne companies is unethical! (Yes, we have raised the matter with the Editor of *The Australian*, and his answer has been to appoint another editor!)

Of the six critiques mentioned in your letter four of them were written by Jack Hibberd and Carrie Hutchinson. A fifth was the review of *The God Trilogy* by Barbara Brookes. At Currency Press, with which Miss Brookes is associated, is shortly to publish the Trilogy, this again seems to me less than correct choice (Even though it may be argued to have worked for our advantage.)

What we are asking is that critics deigned to review Melbourne Theatre Company presentations should be as clearly non-partisan as possible. We do not regard Jack Hibberd and Carrie Hutchinson as being in this category, and we are not prepared to invoke either of these critics to assist future productions.

Yours sincerely,
John Sennett,
Director,
Melbourne Theatre Company

11th May, 1977

June 1, 1977

Mr John Sennett,
Director,
Melbourne Theatre Company

Dear John,

I can't say that I am very enthusiastic about the way you have taken it upon yourself to make complicated what was a very straightforward situation. What has resulted from your action is a good deal of concern from a number of people in the theatre and the press. Your interference in my case has meant that the activities of others, such as Kaine, Glickfeld and Robinson have been taken into account, as well as those of yourself! Many people find a difficulty in discriminating in principle between a person writing a play for a ranger company whilst a critic, running a ranger company whilst being a member of funding organisations, and running a theatre whilst being a critic.

In any event it had been my intention to range from the Australian on June 30, which information you could have obtained by telephone. I would have hoped to have been apprised sufficiently for you to do so.

On the other hand, I do not intend to cease writing for *Theatre Australia*, which has a function dissociated to that of a daily newspaper.

If I hope can maintain the friendly and co-operative relations we had at the time of our review of *Great Street*.

Yours sincerely,

GARRICK TICHENHORF

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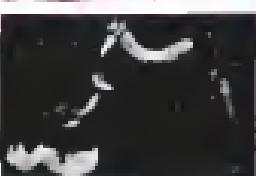
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AT THE MATINEES:
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For Location, Box Plan and Changes of Programme
see LOCAL PRESS and RADIO — Popular Prices

Vaudeville Follies



LtoR: Doreen, Nina, Nola, Pat, Pam & Sue. Sorlie's, 1957.

Peter Kenna tells of some terrifying moments in tent shows and such

The right *The Wolf Family Show* opened at Sydney's Bondi Pavilion Theatre. Winona Hills tore down the pavilion outside screaming the terrible message that her Grampa had probably been taken by the waves. Then he had a violent argument with his father in theoyer and disappeared into the lavatory. Later in the evening he was to be accused by his sister Antigone of being a complete bed-wetter. She had been dipping in the ocean herself and wasn't able to remove one of her Progresso's flipper. She appeared in

the opening number with it flapping grotesquely beneath the arctic-like high-heeled sandal she wore on her other foot. Of course the orchestra didn't move at all and a rather squat Fiberry Hills was driven to distract the audience into providing the atmosphere of booms, bangs and ala-dee-dah-dee-dah to entertain itself.

The Prism factory was in town giving weight to the premise that it is argued by the result showing theatre company in Australia.

Not all of the show comes off, mind you, but the rest of the acting is always there to baffle you over the boring bits. A lot of people talk about Ensemble Acting, and many of them think they're doing it, when you see the Prism Family at work there's no doubt in your mind that, at last, you're watching the real thing.

However, the purpose of this piece is not to ruin the show. I've been asked to write about it in relation to real Australian Variety which, as it is expressed in *The Wolf Family Show*, is now, also, all but dead. But looking back into even our most recent past, one discovers there existed quite a few troupes in the Hills crocodile bopper and more political, of course, and, think. God, not so dancer-prone, but basically aiming for the same thing: to provide drama, family entertainment for simple people whose tastes differed considerably from those of the more blasé

Peter Kenna was born at Balmain, Sydney, in 1926. After a variety of jobs, he became well known as a radio actor. He came to prominence as a playwright in 1959 with his first play, *The Sleepers of Saint George*. Other plays include *John Yell in the Moon*, *Marcia's Circus*, *Zebra Circus*, *A Hard Day and Tomorrow* and *Providence* which have all been produced in Australia.

capital-city dealers.

Sorlie's is the name that comes immediately to mind. Until 1956 they travelled the agricultural show route, following the sun as a big tent that could pack well over a thousand people under its four-kangaroo spread, never playing on the ground but in the towns, because they considered themselves a cut above the rural valentine people. Sorlie was a Negro turned to an amazing vary for women named Grace. Every performance, she would stand at the entrance to the tent "carrying tickets" dressed in a formal evening-gown and waving drop ear-rings so heavily encrusted with diamonds they permanently lengthened the lobes of her ears. Below them, poised to the dress, was a marching diamond beach in the shape of a crocodile. From time to time, some very famous Australian artists worked for Sorlie's: Peter Fresh and Ollie Dunn, to mention.

But for a real family show you have to turn to Burton's Follies. Roy Burton managed the business side of the venture, but his brother and sister were the show's comedians and comedians, and his daughter danced. Eventually she married a dancer, which increased the family's involvement in the evening's entertainment. Also, The Great Lorraine, a very popular dancer, had a show in which his daughter danced. Missie's Little's,



Vaudeville Follies

Mrs Grace Sorlie

Colonial's, Cola's the shares started in 1926 but operated all over the country. Sometimes they were paged into by radio or opposite to each other.

During the late 1920s, my older brother, James, worked as a tent boxer with Roy Bell's troupe. During a "time out," he was walking the roads of the Darling Downs and came upon a small circus and rodeo run by the Chinese Brothers and attached himself to them for a while. They played only the minor banquets of the area during the good-sized fairs (and possibly more unusual audiences) to the big events such as Warwick's and Sale Brothers. On arriving at a place, they would put up their "salute" (a circle of horses or caravans in a top), and then sit down with their musical instruments to play a grand Harry Clifton played a euphonium.



Masses the drums, Charlie a clarinet and Uncle Tom a guitar. The show's clown and back-up rider, a health-tastic Aboriginal nicknamed Red Harry, stayed on the gardens! When the audience did arrive, the pretty, 16-year-old Daphne Clinton was ready at her keyboard dressed mad and she and James sold balloons and presented boxes of chocolates to the lucky winners until the band was ready to start the show inside. Daphne then joined them as the major attraction. She would fly the trapeze, with the slackwires and perform acrobatics posed on the backs of panting horses while her proud father, the ringmaster, extolled her talents to the audience.



THE ARISTO

Patrons, Sorlie's, 1932



invited for this article to recall their own surviving or pleasurable moment at the theatre.

Gloria Dawn's grandparents on her mother's side were circus people too and their daughters, Toots, Gage and Zella (Gloria's mother) worked with them in restaurants. Later the three girls went into Variety as The Worthy Sisters. They performed an acrobatic-contortionist number where Zella appeared out of a silver umbrella dressed as a Frog, Toots danced as a Flamingo and Gage, you know somehow as a Crocodile.

But to return to The Follies the chief delight of these shows is in the disasters which he or she tries to trip them up, of bring and so. They see the stuff of nightmares



THE ARTIST

for all entertainers and you can only laugh about these afterwards because you're so damn glad they're over. Gentry (Patty Hill), the only real pro in the family, falls out of her wheelchair onto her face necessitating the show's cancellation. Mary, the 13-year-old child prodigy, has her music confused by Harry during a piano solo and presents the audience with a parade of half-familiar snippets of nearly every popular classic you can name — some of them played with the music upside down. It was these perceived disasters, and sometimes teaching incidents, in the show which decided me to ask them to star-



Gloria Dawn





Stanley Holloway weighed in with a story about a manager in the English provinces during the tour of *The Cakewalk*. Apparently the town they were playing had never heard of the show's phenomenal six-year run in the West End. There were exactly a dozen people scattered about the auditorium when they began their opening number. Half way through this, an usher appeared leading a little boy down the aisle. "For God's sake," one of the actors shouted at him from the stage, "Don't seat that man! He'll make themse—"

Thurston Rogers, once the regent in Parkinson's company, also appeared in the London production of Max Reinhardt's *The Merry Widow*. The interior of the theatre was transformed into a cathedral and all the spectators were dressed as canons. So too were many of the players, of course, including Thurston, who had to make his entrance from the foyer and move down the aisle up on to the stage. At one performance, a late-comer mistook him for an



BOBBY LE BRUN

urchen and followed her blithely until she found herself dropping silver-fox and trinkets onto pedicabs, skipping merrily in the middle of a Medieval matinée, with no idea in the world of how to get out of it. Mr Reinhardt was the inventor of Total Theatre.

Barney Miller's ventriloquist act, during which he goes to sleep and the doll cracks



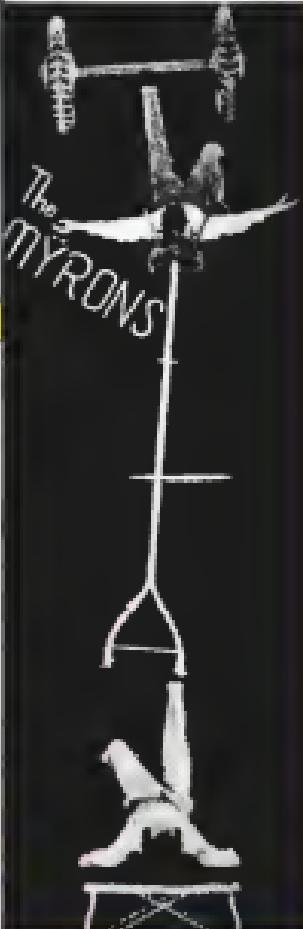
Stanley Holloway

out for someone to rescue him before he falls off. His controller's knees trembled like two wintergreen stems, again told me by my brother James. He once walked the banks of the outback with a man who carried a doll in his swing and "shoved" whatever he chose at a group of people. Another ventriloquist he knew operated in a small tent on the showground. On one occasion, they were playing a fair-ring outdoor when the children were unused to seeing other white people. In came a talk-back doll. One of the children was swinging from the jester's supporting pole and ignoring the ventriloquist's appeal for him not to do so. The act hadn't begun yet and the doll was lying lifeless on a table. Suddenly,

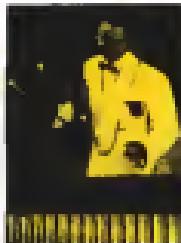


the man grabbed it and pushed it at the child while it shouted, "If you don't stop swinging on that pole I'll snap from your bloody neck!" The child fell backwards open-mouthed and then began screaming. They could still hear him screaming even after he had reached the security of the surrounding bush.

And Grannie falling out of her wheelchair reminded me of a story told me by a cousin, Miss Morgan. She was with Coley's Folks about the same time



Vaudeville Follies



Merry was with Bell her act was an acrobatic walk performed in unison with another girl before a frontcloth while a scene was being changed. It included a series of "slow walks" which means simply turning over backwards continually supported by your hands. Anyway, one night Myra failed to remember correctly the steps as relate to her and "disintegrated" herself right off the edge of the stage and into the percussion section of the orchestra.

Queenie Paul clocked in with a much tender moment. She was playing the National in Sydney (now the Mayfair Cinema) for Sir Ben Fuller, who at the same time was showing Japang the St James (now demolished). Every show she had been in he had been a success and so,

on the night before the St James was to open, he called her over after her own show to "ring back" into the building. She stood on the bare stage and, without an audience and with only Sir Ben and two workmen in the stalls, she put all her heart and soul into "Cheesecake" for him.

Ronnie May, the choreographer and a stalwart of Variety through nearly four decades, remembers staging a Deep South number at the Troc ("My dear, there were Moresses swinging from the rafters") featuring Liver Haps and real rum, which was supposed to fall from the



box into a trough frontstage but it didn't miss, and all the "Darkies" were transformed into bedraggled "Whites" before the eyes of a startled audience.

Ray Cook, at present musical-directing at Cleo's Fine in London, has a whole bag of disaster stories. His favorite is the one about the one-time he was playing piano for which used ultra-moderate light at one of the numbers. You know, things glow in the dark. Well, so do your teeth so you have to keep your mouth closed while you're

LUCKY GRILLS (Atomic Comic)



singing. One night a skater turned the wrong way on a proscenium number and they all went down like dominoes. Out of nowhere 15 pairs of screeching teeth appeared.

And on and on the stories go — only lack of space prevents me. Opera, Ballet, Drama, Variety, no one is safe. There is already a crop of disaster stories building up around the old scene. I'll conclude with one of these. It's also the ultimate "Ugly Duck" anecdote.

A while ago a very well-known Negro singer was performing at an R&B club in Sydney before an audience totally uninterested in her art. They talked among themselves, shouted drunk orders in the mugs and played the poker-matches loudly. He left the stage in virtual distress, to be followed by a comedian who tried over his well because he was either extremely eccentric or manner. They turned their attention to him all right, and that ended. Finally, the club's concession officer was forced to run out on to the stage and greet them with an ultimatum. "Listen, you mongrels," he shouted. "Give the Poof a go or I'll bring the bloody back."

Dramatics: Hills Family Show



★ Don't ★
Forget Our Slogan:
**IT'S ALWAYS
A GOOD SHOW
AT SORLIE'S**

'I want to try to sort out where my artistic roots are . . .'

THE HEAD AND THE HEART

John Gaden plays Harry Carr for the second time in this year's revival of the Shakespearian production of *Twelfth Night*, and his performance has won it wide critical acclaim. To help him with Harry abroad, Niamh gives him a benefit night, which was directed by most of the cast stars of *Modern Times*.



John Gaden, one of our finest actors, tells *Theatre Australia* why he has decided to go abroad

QUESTION Let's start with you, John Gaden, the documentary man.

Gaden: I was brought up in Sydney — Double Bay. I'm 33. Educated in Sydney, Sydney University. I did mostly theatre there, and studied arts and law from 1979 to 1986. It was a very happy time. University drama was going through a particularly high point in a very aware crew. STUDS began to present theatre of the absurd in Australia. Peter was presented there with good productions of *The Birthday Party*, and others. That's where I got my grounding, and it's been a good and bad thing. A bad thing because for a long time I had quite an ivory-tower idea of theatre. I was a little contemptuous of popular culture, which I am not now. We're a very material society, a lot of people spend their lives getting and spending, especially with the death of the Church, which happened here in a big way towards the end of the 1980s, and I think theatre provides that sort of community experience now. People can come into a theatre from their three bedrooms and two cars and laugh or cry at something that doesn't normally touch them.

Q: Would you actually consider the role of the church with the fall of the Church?

Gaden: No, but it's an interesting thought! It's significant that a lot of our best Aussie people had a strong Catholic upbringing: John Bell, Peter Carroll, Ned Flanagan, Ben Blue, Peter Kalina . . . John was very devout at university — not that I mean his acting and directing styles are Catholic! But there's something about what the Church gave people, a life beyond the get-up-and-go-going one, and a sense of those I suppose. We seem to need this as a group, and I've never quite done that, as it's a more private experience while theatre is communal.

Q: Were you religious?

Gaden: Not, very

Q: And now?

Gaden: No, I suppose I'm agnostic really. I don't know, and I don't strongly, but until I was 17 I was deeply religious.

Q: National Theatre started in 1971 with a kernel of people who were all at the university together, went their separate ways, and came back together. What did you do in the intervening five years?

Gaden: I got into the business. John Tasker, who was the director of the South Australian Theatre Company, had applied for people to come for the Young Elizabethan tour. Peter Butler, who'd been at university with me, was the general music manager for the ABC, and happened to be looking over Tasker's shoulder as he was looking at my photograph. And Peter said, "That's John Gaden, I've seen him in things at the university — he's good." So I

got the job. Every thing I did on from there I did two Young Elizabethans tours around South Australia, worked for six months at Theatre 62 when John Edwards was running it, playing all kinds, including Lear — the full lot — which was an amazing way to work. Then a NSW tour playing a dragon, six months at St. Martin's, Melbourne, when it was run by Irene Mitchell, and when I first worked with Barbara Stephens. I met Sandy McGregor [there], too, when I lived with — and have just stopped living with — for six years. They didn't pay returned money in those days, when I arrived, I was living in a tiny flat in North Carlton and I had literally no money. I had to walk from North Carlton to St. Martin's, which was right the other side of town, and back every day, and work in a six-weeks before and after hours. A very character-building time!

Q: You must have been very concerned that the business was going to be good to you?

Gaden: I suppose I was, though I honestly never thought of it in those terms. You know you've got a certain talent, but I just wanted to work in those days. I've worked almost continuously since I went into the business, a lot of it's been with I'd rather not say, but I've never stopped.

It was then that I went to Perth and joined a company called Neema that had formed in the Octagon Theatre on the university campus. At the end of that tour, Gaden came to Perth, he'd been out here doing *Oedipus* in Sydney and *AJ's Wolf* in

Melbourne, and he came because he had an association with the Douglas, which had helped to design. He did three one-week stagings. *The Power of God*, *The Voice of History* and *The Power of Love*. He played the Voice of God, of course, which was wonderful. I was in *The Voice of History*, and we really hit it off. It really wasn't an overwhelming situation. I just had to live with him, I think. And I think it was to who got me placed in Oceania when it went on tour — I took over as Chair Leader.

From then, I went into *The Crucible* at Pratiss, for the Tote, joined the Tote Company at the Parade and stayed with them till 1974-75 through into the Opera House period. It was a good company. We worked hard and did a lot of plays, *Richard III* at the Queen Street, *Lover for Love*, Bill Gaskin's version of *Lover's Labour Lost*, a new play by Michael Boddy called *Crusade of Hercules*, and back at the Tote, Peter's (John Bell's) production of *The Good Woman of Setzuan*. How Could you Believe me When I Said I'd Be your Father when you Know I've Been a Lover all my Life? Terribly. *The Taming of the Shrew*, George Cukor's *Vivian Grey* (Dorothy of the Walls), and so it goes on. An extremely busy time. I did odd things for the MTC, like the Lawler play *The Man who Shot the Athlete*, with Frank Thring and Lee McMullan — that was a pretty bad experience — which really led up to the period of going back to Nomed.

Then I went to Melbourne for the six-month voice course with Rossana Baloo. Just in November 1975. That was a big turning-point for me; I decided to do the course because I didn't know what I wanted to go on being an actor. Certainly I didn't want to go on being an actor in Australia — not because I felt bitter, but because I didn't feel interested any more. The course with Rossana surprised me. It was hard work, five days a week. It will fly. Long and often frustrating, but I came out of it feeling really elated. I felt I had somewhere to go for the rest of my career as theatre.

Q: You teach at now, don't you?

Gordon: Yes. Sometimes well, sometimes not so well. It's basically a method of voice production, not just speech education, but where the impulse for a sound comes from, how it gets out of the body, how we articulate it, vocalise it, as doesn't, in letting it go. It has a good deal to do with the kind of actor who can just be, rather than represent, so it's closely geared to the Method and Stanislavsky, though not necessarily so. The basic technical source involves using energy hopefully just one reason in other areas, both the release of sound and the physical being and experiencing on stage. It doesn't suit everyone, but it suited me as a very same person and a very same actor. I went straight out of that and into *Transfers*, and I don't think I could have done anything better, as it required me to move immediately into contact with difficult areas of the work, what do you do with plays that aren't your dad material? I had *Transfers* for a great

year forward for me.

Q: In the 18 months you've been at Nomed you've done a pretty neat to epitomise the best of the National style. Were you happier there than in the Tote?

Gordon: I've certainly been happy at Nomed — because I've been playing some



great rock roles — not that that always makes one happy. And because I like working continuously, although I have started now that I'm going to have to start doing shows because I've found, whether it's a phenomenon of old age or a greater amount of input to a production, that I can't maintain the workload and then just performing and rehearsing at the same time. When I came to start work on *Young Mr. Lincoln*, "I'm so fed up I have no energy or patience that, I can't work." And it was only in the third week that I pinched the piano hammers and came up with some ideas. I don't like working that way, and it was a lesson to me. I've got to start thinking and preparing myself a little more. I think the more experience you get the harder it gets, harder to make your choices and decisions.

While, like anyone in any organisation, I have my criticisms of Nomed, I want to continue working there because I think it's a theatre that, because of its financial structure, nice limitations and lack of sufficient subsidy, can't get away with haphazard presentation. They have to rely on a certain and the quality of the production to get bums on seats. I think that the more established theatre companies like the Tote and the MTC are getting into areas where they are catering to their subscribers, and there's nothing particularly wrong with that except that it doesn't seem very exciting or interesting. Conditions for actors are better, but I think what has been lost is that immediate need to get audience.

Q: So Nomed's on the right road and the Tote and the MTC in the safety car?

Gordon: Much more on the right road, and you feel it there as a reader. I'm very much concerned with how many people are in every night. I'm also very concerned about the fact that I think our rehearsal periods these are a week too short, in every case, but I understand why they have to be. Ultimately I'm convinced that a good theatre operates on personalism.

Q: What about their fees coming over?

Gordon: I think it has had to be drawn, but it's very hard to know where. Staff like *Great Expectations* books are second-rate pieces being flogged off to the public. We're treated as a place for cut-down British shows to come and make a little money, and they take that money away and do nothing for the theatre. The Trust say they only offer management services, but I know people who've approached them for these services for local productions, and been refused. Why isn't the Royal being filled with the local product — commercial strips for the *Mirred Month*, *A Handful of Friends*, *Old Tote Melba*?

Q: The Trust apparently lost money on *R&B Stories*.

Gordon: Losing money's a pain, but I would have thought that, according to their charter, they're not primarily a money-making concern. Of course, if there's no money they can't promote theatre, but there's no evidence that they're making a planned — and I mean planned — investment in Australian theatre.

We must have things like the RSC, Grotowski, Marcel Marceau because drama is as international as much as a seasonal thing. It's important to see what other countries are doing because it's a slightly altered state of consciousness. Personally I don't want *The Pleasure of His Company*, but there's a host of a lot of people who do, and who am I to say they shouldn't have it?

Q: Should the less, then, be qualitative or quantitative?

Gordon: It's a confusing area. My immediate concern is: Look how much imported stuff is coming out here. It doesn't look to be of very high quality, but again who am I to say that? I balk at drawing a qualitative line, but at a time when theatre is languishing in Australia, we're not going to cover that interest by saying we can't do that, but encourage people can.

There's also the problem for us not here of having our heads in the Old World and our hearts in the New World. We're caught up in that head by tradition, in theatre we're predominantly in the Old World of English rep and the English literary tradition, from the basic sources of Shakespeare right through the canon of English drama. I am fifth-generation Australian, yet what turned me on to theatre was not *Shakespeare's Globe* or *Les Misérables*, but Chekhov, Restoration drama, Jonson, Marlowe, Faustus and Tamburlaine particularly were the things that made me want to become an actor. I've run into a terrible problem with seeing or doing Shakespeare in Australia because, well, at

The moment it's always like a foreign language. The big risk at making it accessible [as John did with *Machi Avodah*] is that you often make it colloquial and lose the spark, and I have felt that we've been doing a pale shadow of the play. *Avalon* doesn't resonate even if we've been doing them right.

We're still a colonial country, perhaps the last in the world, whether we like it or not, and we think that it comes from elsewhere by the people who "know" what it is. The colonial attitude runs through all the institutions of the arts, and it certainly exists in me. That's one reason why I want to go away and look at it. But we shouldn't encourage people, when we know that the work we're seeing is often ultimate drama. It may be lightly entertaining, but you must get priorities right, and I haven't had priority is what I mean. Light entertainment is done better by TV, the only way we're going to survive is to keep pushing the boundaries of what we can do. We're certainly not going to survive as light entertainment, and nor should we hope to.

Q) You could argue that David Williamson's plays have little concern for the actor-audience relationship, that they're real Williamson and stuck in the picture-frame theatre, and that that could be better done on TV?

Guido: It couldn't be more of a no-brainer. One of the strengths of David's work is a good enough to people's taste. That's why they laugh a lot. Williamson and Hancock's writing — not to the same way as *Prisoner* or *Young@40*, but it's one of the other functions of theatre, that of presenting people face to face. That's why David's plays are always so extremely theatrical, he dares on stage to explore situations which can embarrass and confront. I don't think you ever quite get off his plays feeling comfortable. They seem to generate a lot of social discussions about who we are, what we're like, who the middle class is, what our hopes and aspirations are. What our reality is.

Q) He's on the absolute forefront of social thinking and the theatrical act is a confrontation and very intense.

Guido: Yes, and by and large I don't think TV can do that. One of the things I heard Orfeh say in an interview — he'd been asked "Why theatre in this age of mass communication?", he said, "Because theatre has a sense of occasion", which is why there may be noise in the theatre, or mass weeping, mass laughter. I think David's and other Australian plays have that quality, so I wouldn't say for a moment they were just as suitable to film or TV.

Q) You are very much a theatre actor. Why is that?

Guido: I am, probably more by accident than design. Partly because I need, and have wanted, to keep working, and theatre offers me continuity of work. I'm not good at freelancing. I get deeply depressed and lost, and I continually need theatre. And then moments of work in theatre have really prevented me from hanging out, for

work in film and TV. If I want to break into that area it means I'm going to have to take time off to do it. An actor like Johnny Hargreaves, who is now becoming a film actor, spends a hell of a lot of time on the date and it's one of the few ways of ensuring he will get film parts — being available. I was offered work in *Picture Show*. *Mars* and things like that, but I couldn't do it. It goes back to *Getaway*. I was offered the part that Arthur finally played, but I couldn't do it because I was on contract to the Tele for *To Pay She's a Hobo*. Now, had I been free to do that, I might have taken a different direction. I probably would have, but I'm not bitter or sorry about that. Of course, I'd like to work in film, particularly film, and I guess I will do one day.

Q) The star system. You've become a name, some people will go to a show because you're in it. What about the Australian star system? Do you think it would help?

Guido: We couldn't have the Hollywood star system here where people could be created by a huge PR machine, because here, if you're going to be a star in theatre, you have to deliver the goods, and not just once but all the time. Here you're as good as you're last production.

Q) You're gone exposed here?

Guido: You. I believe in a star system because I believe there are some people who can deliver the goods all the time, and people will want to come and see them, and of course a star system begins to happen. But I also believe very firmly that a theatre that operates by saying, "Well, get X, Y or Z, they're big names, so it'll be all right" — that's been shown time and time again not to work.

Q) Is there anything in the Australian character against a star system, with phrases like "playboy-happy" kicked about?

Guido: I frankly don't believe that. Why are the Australian stars you can think of off the top of your head? John, Ray Liotta, Matty Matravers, Frank Thring? They'll all have their detractors, but they have an enormous following and they have it because they deliver the goods. People will very quickly snap if you have a failure, but I think they will anywhere. I don't feel we're less tolerant to failure than anyone else. You build up a relationship with an audience, I feel I have with the National audience.

Q) Do you want to make a comeback — as an actress?

Guido: Of course I would love to work at England. But, you see, making a — and I really think I'm being honest about that — in terms of success, money, name, has never been all that important to me. It's important to me only because I can extend into bigger and better roles. If you're working at the top, you can work with better people, better directors. But I do not want the big-money status, the money and the care. I don't even want a place in history, however minor. But I certainly want to keep working and would be the last guy to do it.

Q) There's a sort of bravery to take risks, and you're always an obviously hard-working actor. How far do you depend on technique?

Guido: I find it very hard to work in any other way than at full stretch, which means involving myself totally. Sometimes I go on an aerobics pilot and suddenly the laughs have been coming in for the last five minutes but I won't share. That's a phenomenon of nerves, and I don't like it, which is why I've got to ease down the load a little bit. I would like, and I think I'm becoming, an actor, more arrogant and less plodding with an audience. Quite often the lack of the right kind of arrogance can make one too involved with presentation and not enough involved with oneself on stage. I certainly don't want to be regarded in the sense of being condescending of an audience. The front-of-house is important.

Q) How much do you take on of yourself on stage?

Guido: The more I work, the more for me I realize that I have to use myself. Whatever moves through me, and however it transforms me, I'm the instrument. Though I wouldn't describe myself as a Method actor, I think all good acting has very much to do with the Method. Stanislavsky was only taking what he thought to be good acting and multiplying it. But I do use myself more and more, it's very important to me what kind of person I am — how the mask of my conscience is, where I live, how I believe. It's important to know where I am as an actor and a person — and the two I feel increasingly inseparable. So the conflict I mentioned about the hand and the heart has become a very big one, and in one sense why I'm going away, probably the reason I want to try to sort out where my artistic roads are because I feel that only when I get my head and my heart totally together can I really act.

Q) Going away is an attempt leap into the unknown. You've got work, local relatives, so why leave now?

Guido: It's the need to jigg for a time. I feel I work cyclically. The last cycle started from the *Romeo & Juliet* concert in Melbourne, now there's another one beginning. I work in great bursts of energy and then I find I need to stay and reassess and re-evaluate. I need distance sometimes. I also feel it's good talking and thinking about the British, American and Polish theatre. I want go and see them and sort them out for myself. The fact of going is frightening because I've never travelled. When *National* decided to give me the benefit night, I was absolutely knocked out, you know you have friends, but I didn't know what people really felt about me — and that's been almost too much. I do get a bit weepy every time and then I think, "Why am I going away and leaving all that?" Well, I'm coming back. The benefit has brought together a whole lot of class and feelings about being in Australia which have never been so strong before. It's certainly going to make it very difficult to say away for any time. Which is perhaps a good thing! ■

Preview of an 'adult' production in the Tasmanian Puppet Theatre's new home

Lauri Thompson

SIX PUPPETS IN SEARCH OF A GENRE

BY LAURI THOMPSON
PHOTOGRAPH BY ROBIN HARRIS
PROPS AND SETS BY ROBIN HARRIS
MUSIC BY ROBIN HARRIS
DIRECTION AND STYLING BY ROBIN HARRIS
PROPS AND SETS BY ROBIN HARRIS
MUSIC BY ROBIN HARRIS
DIRECTION AND STYLING BY ROBIN HARRIS

SET DESIGNER: ROBIN HARRIS
PROPS: ROBIN HARRIS
MUSIC: ROBIN HARRIS
DIRECTION AND STYLING: ROBIN HARRIS
PROPS: ROBIN HARRIS
MUSIC: ROBIN HARRIS
DIRECTION AND STYLING: ROBIN HARRIS

If we could cross Euripides with Tristan Tzara, F. T. Marinetti and Georg Kutter, we would probably end up with something like Nagel Trifft. That this macabre masterpiece lies at the Tasmanian Puppet Theatre's new workshop and theatre, and the results would be *Mosseus*, an absolute source of six puppets in search of a genre. A new genre is what *Mosseus* is all about. It didn't happen overnight and it has a long way to go before it becomes established as a major movement, but it's here and it deserves notice.

I accepted the invitation to review *Mosseus* with a liberal amount of apprehension. It was told to me an adult puppet show (whatever that is) required some sort of cross-fertilisation between *America Marah!* and *Oh, Calcutta!* My previous intent was once more aroused when I arrived at the theatre. The Tasmanian Puppet Theatre is located in Salamanca Place, a battery of warehouses near Hobart's Constitution Dock. I had to enter the theatre through a small opening in a large corrugated-iron door. Inside, I

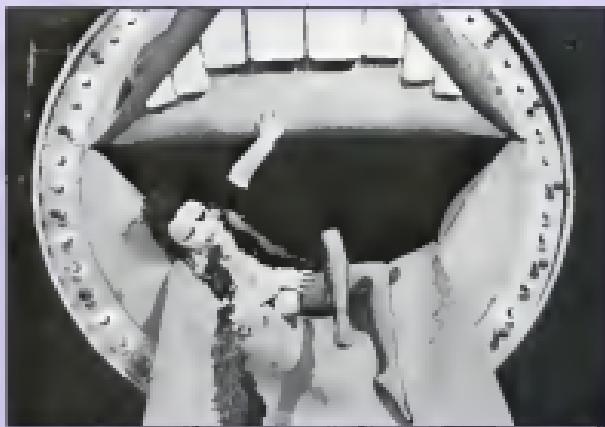
was told I would be viewing a private performance and under no circumstances was I to see the tablets — they hadn't been completed. The foyer of the theatre is on the first floor and takes up nearly half the building. There were several other guests wandering around. Somehow they didn't look the type that would take a gross delight in puppetry. After the traditional token glass of wine, we were ushered into the theatre and it was a theater — in the legitimate sense, not the puppet sense.

I settled into my seat and relaxed. It was a near-perfect little theatre, intimate, but not claustrophobic. I was pleased for my friend Peter Wilson, artistic director and founder of the Tasmanian Puppet Theatre. He has been waiting for a long time for a theatre of his own. For more than seven years, he and his complement of puppets and puppeters have shamed from one end of Tasmania to the other, playing in over-crowded school-rooms and over-manicured halls. Peter began his career performing one-man shows, and when he formed the Puppet Theatre, he was joined by

The Old People from Mosseus







something of an upstart crowing about an idea missing that there was more to puppetry than "Julia's entertainment?" He has at least achieved some poetic justice by opening his new premises with a programme orientated towards adults.

Left-handedly Peter is indebted to the Maromene Theatre of Australia for his success. From the time he opened his first stage production, *Mosel' and Grevil'* in 1971, there was always someone who would hold up the spears of Peter Sculthorpe's *Trojan* for comparison. In those early days the Maromene Theatre of Australia had Peter Sculthorpe's reputation and the assured financial and ideological support of the Elizabethan Theatre Trust. Peter Wilson had a small grant, a part-time job and lots of gas. In 1973, Peter was awarded a Churchill Fellowship which provided him with the opportunity to study the techniques of puppetry in Japan, Korea, Czechoslovakia, Germany, England and the United States. The influence of this tour on Peter's work is clearly shown by the veritable menagerie

of puppets that hang from the walls and ceiling of the Tasmania Puppet Theatre's new second-floor workshop. It must testify to 12 major productions and countless, minor ones. The spectre may still be behind Peter, but he hasn't had the time or inclination to look back. He has been too busy turning an out-of-pocket dream into a company that now employs a business administrator and eight full-time puppeteers. For myself, after having seen a performance of *Mormon*, I find it difficult to believe that the Tasmania Puppet Theatre could be over-shadowed by any company.

Mormon, in every sense an integrated production. The set, designed by Jennifer Davidson, not only creates the atmosphere, it takes an active part in the performance. The stage is dominated by an 18-foot circular disc that rotates during the show. One side of the disc is a large, animated caricature of a woman's face surrounded by an array of coloured circles. Above the disc on the next floor the ceiling has been converted, as in its

Left: *Mormon*.
"A metaphor of illness"



Abby the
Albatross and
her operator
from
Rob A Duck Out



wooden platform used as an acting area for a puppeteer-with-expenses, a Cheshire-cat-like figure in a baulky hat who seems to retain control over the performance below. Behind him was a huge flaming red heart that opened to reveal a waggish-head of red and white flickering lights that gave way when he made his exit. The upper stage seemed deranged; it is the only word that can be used, as there is no dialogue or plot to represent a conscious world, a rough, burlesque life that stimulated the sensitive, emotional world that occupied the lower stage. Four gleaming, alienant ladies cavitated the two floors and were used by the performers for entrances and exits.

The show is a connoisseur of illusions. Props and set-pieces appear and disappear, curtain shades descended from above and rose from the floor and became suspended to make a passing comment, a table is set for two and a rose appears. The massive face of the due belches smoke and her great mouth opens to bring the audience to a surreal night-club show. There is

even a traditional Punch and Judy show with a screeching ending and mordacious symbolic cut-offs, all jumbled up to make an episodic visual collage. The show has a typical Triffidness about it, an unwilling involvement with Odysseus and the Fata Morgana and the refusal to make a grossly commercial. But the show is not a hodge-podge, all the pieces fit, adhesion by a self-disguised technique.

The adult centre around a fearless, child-like figure removed from a region of the centre of the stage and controlled by three puppets dressed in black velvet. All the puppets were dressed alike, more for dignity than disguise, as they often had their faces. Seeming to float in the air, the fearless child re-enacts a symbolic journey of birth and discovery while being observed and sometimes accosted by elements of the burlesque life on the stage above. The ordered becomes too much for her, and she eventually expires and is about to be given up to oblivion when her limp body is retrieved by a pert, grotesque bag-like creature that timidly attemp-



Above:
Tobech Hethere,
piano director
of Big Noise,
left.

out of the darkness. The bag is joined by five other creatures of equal size (all over seven feet), who prod and roar out the limp body and, after a mock discussion, send it back into the darkness. The old bag is left alone clutching her lifeless prey, watching patiently for someone or something to answer for its premature death. The child is then taken from the bag and regrettably deflated in the upper stage. The bag returns to observe and the play ends with a usual epilogue. Throughout the play, the action is qualified by the voices of Peter, Floyd, Tomita, Brian Eno and King Crimson.

Mosseus has more to offer than a visual experience. The combination of music, puppetry and stage bears a close resemblance to classical poetry. The performers (he refers to them as puppeters) would not only be elegant, it would be aesthetically determined inside their characters and exist in close control of those means. I had no desire to distance them aesthetically from the performance because they were as much a part of the performance as any of the other devices that were used. They often interacted with their puppets and their deliberate, patient motion set up a tension between the rhythm and the music of the piece. When I showed the others would be too much as was released by the Chaperonique figure on the pupal high above the stage. He created illusion upon illusion until he exploded himself into a bouquet of hearts and streamers.

Mosseus is like a Baroque code, a rhythmicity that is sometimes practical, sometimes elegant. It exists in question rather than accepted, and is measured by the time it takes to complete an action and not by the stress placed on its individual components. It's all very controlled and very professional. To me the most impressive and awesome part of the programme was the appearance of the giant bag-like puppets that floated in and out of the darkness like basket-rolled睡眠者. They spoke, they changed, but their movements, tuned to the music of Paul Tomita, proceeded them with an abstract language. They were not only logically measured and easily gained the sympathy of the audience. There is no doubt that Mosseus appeal rests on the emotional rather than intellectual enjoyment of the audience, but to refer to Mosseus as a "puppet show" is a gross misnomer. It is clearly a contemporary attempt at a classical mode.

In retrospect, Mosseus is the obvious embodiment of the Tasmanian Puppet Theatre's search for a style. Over the years the theatre has tried and perfected many techniques only to discard them in favour of a new challenge. Peter states that continual experimentation is necessary if the Puppet Theatre is to survive.

"The search and exploration for new techniques is our style," he says. "Although we have orientated at least once a year, Tasmanian audiences are still our bread-and-butter. Tasmania has such a small population it doesn't take long to dominate the scene. When that happens, the

production becomes obsolete. We have to keep trying out new ideas to keep our audience support — especially overseas."

When started as a search may end up as a Systematic tool, but Peter is not too concerned. "Puppetry is the theatre of the impossible. There are no conventions that constrain the form. The sky's the limit." The emphasis of Peter's philosophy weight heavily on his puppeters, who have to be something of a craftsman. "They have to be good writers, as well as craftsmen and manipulators. The energy of the puppet must come from the puppeteer — they are not separate, distinct entities, one pre-supposes the other, which is why, in most of our shows, both are on display. A good puppeteer is an exciting technician as a good puppet."

Mosseus is a culmination of the techniques perfected by the Puppet Theatre over the years. "Barakat", a style Peter first attempted with Tales of the Alabaster in 1972, and more recently with Big Nose, which was created and directed by Takanori Tomono. Peter met Takanori, who is a director with the P.U.K. Theatre in Tokyo during his fellowship year, and invited him to come to Australia to work with his company. Following that, Peter developed the style with a production of *Asuka-Asuka* in 1976. Peter put his puppeters behind large masks for a production of *The North Wind and the Sun* and many of his productions have used Black Theatre effects. Peter doesn't hesitate to use traditional rod puppets or marionettes if the production demands it, but he is always searching for different ways to redefine their limits. "There is always something different, something new to be learnt from the theatre."

In conversation, Peter makes no distinction between the art-form of puppetry and the legitimate theatre, which is perhaps one of the reasons he has been so successful. He refuses to be trapped into defining the limits of his methods of setting up specifications for puppetry and persistently shorting his potential much further than anyone in the genre. ■



National Theatre Awards

**What
the critics
say:**



N S W



C. Sibley



Gordon



Sue



Bell



Wherrell



Diane

Norman Rossell: Gordon Chater and John Gaden, who tied for the Best Actor award in New South Wales, both won for their work in Sydney productions — Chater for his moving, un-narrative performance in Steve I. Speirs' *The Education of Benjamin Franklin* and Gaden for the title 'The Head and the Heart' in the state of Theatre Australia for a role de force as Henry Carr in Tom Stoppard's *Travesties*.

English-born Gordon Chater is one of the best known actors in Australia. He came here to appear in a J.C. Williamson comedy, but quickly established himself as an outstanding new talent. With his television and film work he had begun to move away from the theatre until he made his electrifying comeback as Robert O'Brien in *The Education of Benjamin Franklin*.

Sue Sayers' Best Actress award was almost certainly for her splendid performance as Blanche du Bois in Tennessee Williams' *A Streetcar Named Desire*, but this is also a tribute to the sheer consistency of her work throughout the year, with highly distinctive performances in such varied roles for the Old Tote as Lorraine in Eugene O'Neill's *Mourning Becomes Electra*, Ruth in Steven Gray's *Galileo Galilei* and Gertrude Pogany in French Whiz's *Scandal at Saragossa*.

John Bell and Richard Wherrell, joint winners of the New Dramatist award, are, together with Kim Horler, the artistic directors of the National Theatre. Bell won for his refreshingly innovative production of *Much Ado About Nothing*, Wherrell for his brilliant staging of *The Education of Benjamin Franklin*. Wherrell, who also directed last year's Old Tote production of *A Streetcar Named Desire*, is a Bachelor of Arts from Sydney University.

John Bell has recently directed such successes as Ray Bradbury's *The Christmas Anthology*, and David Williamson's *The Knack* and *A Handful of Fingers*. His award-winning production of *Much Ado About Nothing* also shared the 1975 National Critics Award.

Mandy Jackson was the New South Wales Dwyers award, her award-winning design was for a *Streetcar Named Desire* for the Old Tote.

For 24 year old playwright Steve J. Speirs the first National Professional Drama Awards must count as a triumph. He won the Best New Talent award, while the Best New Play award went to his *The Education of Benjamin Franklin* and this was also the vehicle for the Best Actor and Best Director awards.

The National Theatre produced a tour of an Australian wide tour with New Zealand, Hong Kong and Japan to follow. His play is also set for production in London and New York.

Norman has been a professional writer for three years and his works include *Stal*, a historical rock show, *Apexia*, a venture into adult musicals, and *Young Mr* which had its premiere at the 1975 Adelaide Festival, with a revised version staged at the "Warren" this year.

S

A

Tony Baker: Jude Kuring may have moved feelings about her selection as the Actress of the Year in South Australia since she always claims to interviewers that she is an actor, not an actress. Still, she is undoubtedly a fine acting person, and the second category at least allows for recognition of another polished actor, Fulton Hogan.

In Ms Kuring's case, the judges must have been influenced not only by her work for the South Australian Chamber Company, and especially in *And Then Resound Death A Little*, but also for her leading role in the *Carols* *Christmas Show*. The learned and convincingly propagandistic music was aimed at performance, but nonetheless one of the more enjoyable theatrical events of the year.

Mr Hogan's award is his second in successive years. He also picked up the Critics' Circle Presentation in South Australia. Both awards are a reflection of his contribution to theatre down the years, but especially for his performance as Methusalem in *The Last of the Kingfishers*, one of the SATC's undisputed successes of the year.

Chair of George Ogilvie as director of the year is both obvious and pleasing. He has had three of critics' during his career as artistic director of the SATC, but what artistic director worthy of the title hasn't? His achievement from 1972, when he took over control of the company early the year, was a solid one, not only in individual productions but in giving the company shape and style and making a series of new permanent homes in The Playhouse.

In the choice of Ms Kuring, he might equally have qualified as actor of the year. His last active job with the SATC was to play a clown in the *Christmas Show*. He did so with a skill that was reminiscent of Kazan's *And Talking of Clowns*. I long thought that his *Streetcar* best play — *Discreet Evidence* — nearly took the honour for it — but it is an excellent example of perhaps the most remarkable fact of this young playwright's talents: his capacity to understand and characterize areas of experience one would have thought foreign to him.

Add recognition of Diane Cilento, now, like Judie Ogilvie and Speirs, departed the local scene, for the imaginative theatricality of her acts and you have awards that are bestowed on individuals who deserve them and on a discipline and in South Australian theatre.



Jackson



Kuring



Baker



Hogan

Q L D

Best Actress Pat Thomson has been awarded Best Actress and Best New Talent in Queensland. The latter award is interesting because her presence, sense of timing, developed vocal tone, and that wonderful weathered look suggest she might have been round "when Macbeth was in vogue". Not surprising that her awards were for *Entertaining Mr Sloane* and *The House of Bernarda Alba*.

David Cleweling's award was for the title part in *The Moonstruck*, one of those rarefied pieces in which he also produced and directed the show. This is good Cleweling territory because he has a secure sense of style, a rare feeling for the delights of language, and an appreciation of the witty and lucid French mind.

Best Director went to Joe MacCollum for the Queensland Theatre Company production of *The Repentance*. Joe is a director who looks for the possess of a piece. With many actors, especially inexperienced ones, this is risky because it easily over-balances into mawkishness. When it works, however, it's really fine. (There is drama, and action, and audience alike respond to the demands.)

Another award goes to the QTC for Best Designer. James Redwood has piled up considerable experience in the past five years with external work in opera and television, and his award was for general highly consistent achievement. He uses the resources of the QTC without extravagance, he presents the actors with highly workable spaces, he delights the eye of his audience and in the hands with the QTC Theatre stage, he is holding his own — no mean compliment.

various roles in *A Toast To Miller*.

Sylvia Soupe (Best Actress) has also appeared in the last two, but especially as Marge in *A Toast To Miller*. This was a marvellous performance, combining terrific singing, fine physical acting and a sparkle of ageing.

After that, it's fairly clear why Jack Hibberd was Best New Play, with *A Toast To Miller*. It fulfills the strict requirements of what a popular play should be.

Best Director, Mick Dodger is rarely the most consistently interesting director in Melbourne, showing what a little imagination and rapport with actors can achieve. He also had a hand in the re-staging of best plays like Marivaux's *Games of Love* and *Chance*, and *Arabs of Persia* (both).

Best Designer was bit of a surprise in Carol Porter, but her work on Handke's *Ms Fort My*, *Tower* was luminous and quite beautiful.

In the New Talent department, Liddy Clark took the honours. Far from being a neophyte, she is an accomplished actress, as evidenced by her work in *The Postman*, *City Slicker* and *Oberammergau* & *Small Spaces*.

W

A

Margot Laker (Anne Nevin effect, December) is at her best in the Australian drama. The 1976 productions included Williams's *A Handful of French* and Kanes's *Daughter of the Town*. Day with *The Days of our Ancestors* probably brought out best scenes a gift for welding actors and an ensemble. Most popular success of the season was Bennett's *Madame Bovary*.

Bill Dowd (Best Designer), earthy in spacious and gracious sets, and showed versatility in *A Man for All Seasons* (epicene), *The Green Book* (gracious), *Alwyn and Old Love* (intimate) and *The Days of our Ancestors* (spartan classic). Earlier successes included memorably gorgous *Hilfe Dotti* designs.

Marian Jones (Best New Talent) is a graduate of the Western Australian Theatre Arts Course at WAIT. Jones has made a smooth transition into professional theatre. Whatever a student production he has invariably outstanding in mature roles, he now shows a flair for comedy, and was recently seen in Shaw's *Man of Destiny* at the Melbourne Playhouse.

Best Play was Melvyn Bragg's adaptation of Kafka's *The Trial*. Astonishingly variable, Kafka's better known as an actor (Marlowe and Kaspar being his outstanding roles in 1976), also as an arranger of spectacular sword-fighting in *Macbeth*. He also adapted Orwell's *Animal Farm* for theatre.

V I C

Cullen

Kirkup

Redwood

Porter

Clark

Nevin

Dowd

Bratt

Jones

Laker

Bratt

The Awards

1979-80
1980-81
1981-82
1982-83
1983-84

1984-85
1985-86
1986-87
1987-88
1988-89

1989-90
1990-91
1991-92
1992-93
1993-94

1994-95
1995-96
1996-97
1997-98
1998-99

BEST ACTOR	Gordon Chater John Gaden	David Cawthron	Ivan Hadjeman	Mick Gillies	
BEST ACTRESS	Rolyne Nevin	Pat Thompson	Arie Kuring	Evelyn Krupa	
BEST DIRECTOR	John Bell Richard Wherrett	Ian MacLellan	George Ogilvie	Mick Radjer	Aaron Pearce
BEST DESIGNER	Mandy Dickson	James Robertson	Shane Quisen	Carol Porter	Bill Dried
BEST NEW TALENT	Steve Spears	Pat Thompson	Steve Spears	Liddy Clarke	Murphy Jones
BEST NEW PLAY	Benjamin Franklin	The Department	Young Ma	A Toast to Melba	Animal Farm/ The Trial

Richard Wherrett

The Playwrights' Conference

The Australian National Playwrights' Conference has I believe a twofold function, which I argued at its opening on the 15 May, and in the summing-up two weeks later:

- 1 To encourage new writers and new writing from established writers.
- 2 To provide the means by which the profession as a whole can come together to resolve mutual problems and improve security.

I believe the value of the conference to be immeasurable, for these reasons:

- 1 The encouragement of Australian writing is the means by which we come to understand ourselves as people and as a nation. This, I repeat, would not be questioned. This year, of the 83 playwrights who submitted work, eight had their plays workshopped for five days (five hours a day), with a final public reading and discussion, right had public readings of their work, with a discussion following and a remuneration by the artistic director, and roughly 20 participated as observers attending all rehearsals and discussions, with directors and voting personnel always available for explanations and observations.

All told, over the five conferences, more established authors such as Alan Seymour, Dorothy Hewett, Alan de Groot, Roger Palmer and Steve J. Spear have experienced at one conference.

How can the value of this be measured? The facts are that roughly a third of the plays workshopped have proceeded to

production. And there are cases where writers such as Mary Gage and Kenneth Rose, have progressed from (a) observer participation, to (b) having a play workshopped, to (c) being a play produced (Mary Gage's *Everyone's a General* at the Perth Playhouse, and Ken Rose's *The Smoker* at the MTC and *Down the Hatch Against the Wind*. *After at June Street*). For the rest, the probabilities are these: it is an act of faith, but I know that at Nirimbo two years ago, we never knew where the next Australian play was coming from; today we are pleased two months ahead, and the competition red-hot.

The conference has undoubtedly contributed to this growth in quality. This year, options on four of the plays workshopped were taken out at the conference.

2 The seminars provide the focus for the profession as a whole to come together. There were 10 this year, six a day and a half-hour's discussion each on all manner of issues. It is important to remember that resolutions need not be made at the seminar for the seminar to prove successful. Discussion continues before and after the event, and the concentrated nature of conference, by which one is, as it were, captive to the situation, channels the answers to sought on the unstructured and that all sorts of new questions be posed.

I do not mean that to sound heavy, present at academic. It is relaxation and intensively stimulating. It is simultaneously as valuable as scholarly as the workshopping and the most difficult to articulate.

I was delighted to welcome this year Ray Lawler, Peter O'Toole, Katherine Breitman, Bob Ellis, Graeme Blundell, John Bell, Anne Bassar, Ken Southgate, Ian Heslin, Terry Clarke, Arthur Dignan, Garrie Hutchinson, Mick Roeger, Tony Ingaram, Hilary Linstead, Philip Parsons, Duncan Warburton, Paul Rees, Bill Redmond, Hilary Faletang, Alan

Bago, to name but a few.

I was also pleased to welcome Sean Wilson and John Osborne. It is important to realize, of the overseas guests, two things:

1 They function to provide an outside point of reference, in the case of English ones.

2 They are paid for indirectly by outside funds, not by conference subsidy.

This is a lottery, of course — it is impossible to determine the qualifications they can make. John Gathorne, I believe, was not interested in us at the first place, and arguably had no right to accept the invitation. The subsequent bid publicly lay at gain here, obviously, as did Sean Wilson, on the other hand, was generous, generous, open and positive, in a great deal to offer from the English experience.

It was also a great pleasure to welcome 14 critics from across the nation for the final three days, a mix-up by which we could encourage the concept of their being an integral part of the profession. All the more will it be that some part in this understanding the conference's aims and roles. Of the 14, four solo (Len Radke, Melbourne, the Age, Tally-Ho, Sydney, The Star, John Kirby, Adelaide, The Sunday Mail and David Marr, National Times) taught me either Bill Sharman, the administrator, or myself flat comment — a judgement of what the conference was about would readily demand that Yes, without research or discussion, Francis Kelly's "Impresario" in the Australian argues that the conference was "useless". I find this deeply disturbing.

Finally, I was delighted that the conference coincided with the managerial presentation of the National Professional Theatre Awards. While words in television and film proliferate constantly as award in the theatre by which the profession itself can voice and acknowledge quality I believe to be extremely worth while.

Judi Parrott in *Karenin*

'Stimulating, tender, funny, but slightly shallow'

GOING BUSINESS

BOB ELLIS

Karenin. Directed by Richard Brinkman. Sydney Opera House, May 1877. Director: Richard Brinkman; lighting designer: stage manager: Vicki Simpson.

Karenin by Richard Brinkman. Mr Darrow: Robert Doyle; Mrs Karenin: Judi Parrott; Charlie Stavro: Michael John Herremans. *The Counter J'Aperitif* by Jean Genet. Director: Judi Parrott; The Man: Ralph Corlett. *The Play* by Max Pomeroy. The Wife: Judi Parrott; The Husband: Ralph Corlett; The Visitor: Robert Daws.

Gone Bananas, an exhilarating, sleek and, on the whole, worthy evening of short plays,麻雀有風，由Richard Wherrett at the Merrivale Theatre. Dimensions left a little short, I think, of having a memorable occasion. Each writer showed a lot of promise and the sequence had a wholeness of tone, but the overall effect was warmly forgivable.

No, of course, that you can do that much in the absence of a brilliant idea, with three or four acts, no set and 45 minutes of time. Richard Brinkman did a good deal with masks and monkey suits in *Karenin*, a semi-allegorical narrated reverie sketch about a rich Russian couple whose arranged, boundless non-passions turn to marry a gorilla, and bring her around for an evening meal of bananas, plus bananas tickling and pawing at the audience. In order to make her less nervous, the parents

put on monkey masks, and the resulting theatrical effect of this, which would go down quite well in deepest Poland, together with one of the digressions about the probable number of the good children, and the charming, endearing effect of the small space, carried it to success on and into something more evolved than its rural Prague local, than of a Paul Hogan sketch. The performances were good, in particular Stephen Thorne on the piano, idealistic, elegant and sly. The audience boozed with laughter, but a small too heavy reminiscent of the nightmarish song in *Cabaret* about marrying a gorilla ("If you could see her through my eyes, she wouldn't be Jewish at all") failed to applied its originality.

The second play, *The Counter J'Aperitif* by John Savernick, was rather more original and surprising, not so much in conception (as taken place in one of those blank, perfunctuous anaesthetics to the Ghent Void), but in the tenderness of the characterisation of the central personage, a worn-heeled virgin spivette muddling the long course of her doleful trajectory, from naivety to self-sacrifice, that brings her to the dull quietude. Judi Parrott's extraordinary performance was full of that sort of sacramental come-out glow which many of us will find familiar from the women of a former generation. The present vagueness of the giddy or provocative seems to lie in the fact of this audience droughty importance.

The most successful play (because it's approximately funny) is *The Play* by Max Pomeroy. It deals with the family world one which a vulgar workman returns upon being fired from his job. In his family world, he is appointed chairman of the board, owns a Rolls-Royce, has a beautiful wife, is elegantly coiffured, and has an unusual physique. The theatrical styles vary wildly and the best, a Noel Coward adultery triangle, goes from Bob Daws and Ralph Corlett (sort of the whitest performances) to Vicki Simpson's country Coward, in particular, especially in his recurring rated attacks on the furniture, laying the carpet, assaulting the chair, chewing up and swallowing unwhole integers, and at one point leaving the theatre altogether and running around in the parking lot outside, displayed that sort of disciplined brain damage that is usually seen in only the most limerick and embodied actors.

On the whole, a good evening, a bit tender and funny, but slightly shallow evening, well worth having seen and a great boon as double to three potentially worthwhile writers.

'The play served the purpose of confirming attitudes for a partisan audience'

THE CALKIN MAN

LEN CRAVENSON

The Calkin Man by Robert J. Morris. Presented by the Aboriginal Arts Board of the Australian Council in association with Robert Morris and Brian Syron. Round House, Bondi, NSW. Opened 28 April 1977. DIRECTION George Ogden; SET DESIGN Wendy Dickson; COSTUMES designed by Michael Carter (also responsible for lighting); GILLIAN KENNEDY, lighting design; SUZANNE JORDAN (production manager); CHARLES DUNN (sound); RUTH JUSTINE (soundtrack); PROPS PREPARED TERRY PHILIPS; STAGE HANDS LINDA, SCOTT, MILLIE, BRIAN, SUZANNE (Props Manager); GREGORY MCKEEON; BUDGET; DESIGNER BOBBI FUGGER; COSTUME: MAX CALLEN.

When I went to see *The Calkin Man* I had not read the play, but I had high expectations related to the director (George Ogden), the designer (Wendy Dickson), and the cast which included Brian Syron and Max Callen. I knew that the play had originally been workshoped at the Black Theatre Arts Centre, was about black Australians and had been written by me. I probably, without having formulated the idea, expected something fairly startling and tough in the area of protest against social injustice (like Lenox Jones's *Chauvinism*, say). The reasons for the partial disappointment of these expectations are hard to disentangle and are not all related in a direct way to those responsible for the production. In an attempt to disentangle them and, simultaneously, to cast some light on the structural factors which can contribute to one's attitude to a production, I had better take things in chronological order on the evening in question.

Few, if any, before even approaching the theme, think the problem of the stage version. They are accustomed and illogical. Most like the play, because it is something of a first (partially in my experience, since the whole case against social injustice to black people is Australian). Must it be expressed in the terms (national) I imagined that I somehow expect? Must it not be revolutionary, provide answers? Such preconceptions are curiously unfair but they are, nevertheless, part of the unconscious attitude I bring with me.

Then, still before the play begins, there is the experience of the other members of the audience and the mediators. For some reason I always find the Bondi Forum Theatre slightly depressing and the fact

that audience who ensemble will only total about 40 makes it even more so. Last night I was wondering why I don't like watching the rest of the audience sitting in and obviously waiting they could enter from the back of the auditorium, out the front. The small thrust stage seems to have been raised since I saw it last, but it still seems to have not fully rebounded from being bashed up against a closed wall which gives no feeling of backstage depth and potentialities. As a theatre space it gives me a feeling of cardboard-thinness and silicon-ball rockability. Being in the audience makes me feel part of a weekly cultural minority — like Christians in pagan parties.

Re-entering into the programme, I am told that "With his childhood experiences of Mission life, Robert has written a powerful and dramatic message that should be seen by all Australians, black and white. Through his skillful writing Robert has set allowed the strong sociological message of his play to overwhelm its dramatic roles." I find myself speculating on the people who have found their way to the theatre to see this play and guessing that most of them are likely to be stuck between the eye by the sociological message and stand in no need of reassurances about literary merit.

The play begins with a short prologue in which an archetypal aboriginal family unit (father, mother, son) is visited by an equally abstract group of white ones (priest, soldier, civilian) but excepted clear that, ultimately, I thought Brian Syron gave a fine performance as Sweet William, but that initial appearance, looking not at all like a healer or bushman with body make-up, slumped his gamma down behind an "Indian" couch, did nothing for me, in the way of getting the evening off to a convincing start. What do I mean by convincing? Well, Brian Syron, clothed and in the character of Sweet William, talking directly to the audience, is convincing and so are the film sequences at the end of the play. I guess you could make the case of expansion that's intended here convincing-as-film. The exaggerated figures of the priest, soldier, and civilian, however, appear in super-theatrical style, although from near-projection, are abruptly transformed into the real figures by the removal of the screen. The scene works a bit as it is truck. In this sense I feel less close to overlook such details, put not close enough to forgive them. But since the whole nature of the spirit seems to resist anything in the way of a theatrical urge, it is something of a triumph for director and designer to have brought it off at all.

I left the show, the archetypal father has articles of clothing thrown to him. With some pavilions, he puts them on, transforming to the Sweet William of the subsequent prologue. This man, which might have been a fully developed savage-discovering-civilised-and-working-out-how-to-settle-towners creature, is treated with somewhat dubious severity here — the pavilions are only a again — giving the impression of a certain lack of faith in

Venzione del Premio Nazionale della Critica 1976

Una produzione di John Bell

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di Giacinto Shakespeare

Westie e crepa pelle a splendida tenore/
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Dudu' magritte

Splintos, instigatori, esibitori, emozionanti,
esilaranti reperti»
Dudu' magritte

Salvo il Cagnu

e per sole cinque settimane

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INGRESSO INCLUSE

the idea. It is after all, only a transition like this is something unsatisfactory about the composition.

Sweet William is a present-day, drunken, down-and-out black in Sydney. In a long monologue of jokes ("Any imitation of an aboriginal crew black, black, black"), prettily digerived stories ("How the arvo has its wings"), and rhetorical questions ("What do you want from me?"), Sweet William comes across as a good blend of naturalistic observation and authored wit, stock-gags, and charm. Brian Syron does this extremely well in a voice that manages to sound right and mannered simultaneously — a difficult test of vocal accommodation which is only matched by the skill of the writing in doing the same thing. He then proceeds to entertain us with a bushblack account of how he came to Sydney A small set is assembled by black-clad stage hands. At this point I began to register that the play is presented as almost as many styles as there are scenes. I wondered if this had always been the author's intention, or whether it was the result of workshopping, the choice of the director, or merely general expediency. The set represents the kitchen of the shanty in which William and Ruby and their two children live (a Cowra, I think). The scene that ensues establishes his quirking as a symptom of bushman, chauvinist, and colonial observation, his dark skin and life-reducing dependence on the tribe, the boy's lack of respect for his father, the poverty-stricken status of the younger child. All this is contrasted in the realistic tradition of mainstream Australian drama, but thematic connections with the earlier aboriginal version (*The yell*) of Christianity, the father/son relationship. I am inclined. When several scenes, the pattern has been de-

united with such complaisance that there seems little for the second half to do.

In it, however, the story is complicated. William decides to go to Sydney to make a start and to try to find a better future for Ruby and the kids. The other part of the action is concerned with the son's theft of oil, which brings down the wrath of the oilman/manager/inspector, Max. Max offers some fine work with the job as a dialogue making it stylishly real and highly dramaticatic, and seeming to enjoy the character's change of heart. Having seen the conditions in the shanty and the actions of the family, he forgives the thefts and gives the family food, risking a grisly big cake which sounds just the right note there, a piece of "latter-day mythology" according to which there will never be a cake for black boys as well as white. "I'm not the whole of the dramatic action which will — Bryan Syron is ably supported by Justine Barwick's anxious, determined Ruby, a role made sympathetic by enduring. Broken by parents, understanding and faith-in-human. The family is completed by an unusually convincing child actor (I saw Teddy Phillips, I think). My only doubts about the action are related to the level of realism — the shanty is-on-cape, the dramatically punctuated with several unconvincingly over and over than the realistic I have seen in Alice Springs. On film, of course, you can have it for real, and make a real body in the crib. When the film begins, which comes up next, I expected, I began to wonder, retroactively, whether the whole play might be better rethought as film.

William's life in Sydney is swiftly covered in the first film section (these were directed by Gillian Armstrong), which shows him involved in a pretty-waggish affair outside Redfern pub. After this, he returns at-pause and tells us a fluid story about being camped out at night with white men on a property and seeing a beautiful black female again, who is simultaneously shown on film coming towards us through scrubby trees, who remained unseen to the white men and can, indeed, only be seen by them. (The figure of our saving her, even on film, is not quite clear to me.) The play ends on an evoked and passionate note of appeal for the return of this black woman, and it was enthusiastically received by both the black and white members of the audience, the former having been pleasantly and vicariously involved (on the identifying level especially — rather like a Blacktown audience at *EJ* Wodkoff throughout, though not more so than some of the white audience members, who also groaned in recognition of the exaggerated white optimism).

Clearly the play served the purpose of confirming margins and beliefs for a particular audience. I found that an audience almost shaming when I had watched the play coolly, without feeling either emotionally involved or intellectually challenged, had had no success in getting the play on the simple level of its "preaching to the converted". But then how could a larger

to be unconverted audience? Perhaps as a film, it could get booking and commercial release. Although, in retrospect, I could not feel that the play had been particularly strong in either its message or its "dramatic values", equally I could not conclude that any aspect of the play or production was genuinely wrong or artistically unacceptable. Rather my feelings seemed to have arisen from the waging extreme dialectics, questions of form and style, minor obscurities and disconcerted presentations set out above.

I still find it surprising that the low-key domestic realism and raw-audience theatricality which characterise the work of many white Australian writers should also characterise this play. But again, this surprise is mine. The shanty itself is a white European tradition. In choosing to write for it, a black author is probably automatically compromising his vision. But it makes William's play at the end of the play an authentic black vision which doubly charms.

A production that conveys a rare sense that the play itself is being allowed to speak

HAMLET

HELEN YAN DER POOLER

Hamlet by William Shakespeare. Hunter Valley Theatre Company, Hunter Valley Theatre, Newcastle. Opened 21 May 1977. Directed and designed by Terence Clarke. Lighting and technical design, Patrick Meeson. Hosted Alan Parker, Farnham, Conacher, Arden, Second Player, Third, Chorus, Second Gentleman, Paul Hodge, Fourth Player, Farnham, Conacher, Michael Crawford; Hunter, Fifth Player, Soliloquy, Tom Conacher, Parker, Chorus, Conductor, Conductor, Third Player, Soliloquy, Hunter, Lee Armstrong.

Condenser: Portfolios Press. Ned Reckling. Costume: Stephen Rotheram. Sets of all musical, Clusters, The House, Marcellus, Horatio, Ghosts, Ambassadors, Attendants, Stage Manager, Players, and Stage Director: Julian, Denevage, Attendant, Michael Taper, Conductor, Virginia Wright.

Terence Clarke's vigorous production of *Hamlet* at the Hunter Theatre is quite remarkably lacking in grandiosity. Without wishing to sound naive, I would say that it conveys a rare sense that the play itself is being allowed to speak. Mind you, the words of the first scene were lost somewhere in the artifice of some of the unpreachable Hunter Theatre, with the result that the all-too-easily-knocked-in Ghost inspired more mirth than terror in the audience. One effect of this was that the initial focus was upon Claudius and the Court rather than on Hamlet's problem. Yet Romeo's anguish and wide King early overshadowed Alan Parker's superbly atmospheric Parker for the early part of the play, dramatising one of the general difficulties with Hamlet. When cast contained Pat Bishop's delicious Gertrude, too, it was hard to imagine that she had spurned the Prince, and there were too many occasions early in the play when Parker, played with superb timing by Michael Teper, showed his wit to be superior to Hamlet's by taking the audience into his confidence.

But the strength of the production is not revealed in the early scenes at all, and Parker's Hamlet soon shows both his wit and his control over the "actor-audience" relationships of the play. By the time of "What a rogue and peasant slave am I", his soliloquies were being heard in silence by an otherwise raucous audience and this related well to the development of the actors acting theme in the interpretation of Hamlet. The play burns into life with the arrival of a three-tressed comedy-triumvirs, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern in the form of Andrew Shatto and Neil Redfearn, and from this time the mouth of snarling and baring deception and treachery becomes dominant. Terence Clarke contrived also to "stage" the Nosferatu scene as a play, with Polonius and Claudius as the abounding audience — an extraordinarily lived and



moving scenes of the score. The "Isabella" scene seemed to set the pace and tone for the subsequent Monostirio scene in which Claudio's consciousness is caught.

I should say at this point that Tomasz Gajda's first set for the play dramatised the "classical" presence of which I speak. A progressively raised platform with steps leading down from it, the set evoked the curtain above at the Greek theatre — a rigidly demanding logical space. The back of the platform was so constructed as to allow characters to "appear" suddenly and dramatically over the top of the set. In the Play scene the function of the set was clearly defined in terms of the purpose of the scene, which is generally to focus attention on Claudio and the Queen, and on Hamlet's pleasure in manipulating them. By putting the action on the stairs and the actors on the downstage floor, the play satisfactorily provided a foreground for the real and silent drama on the upper stage. My only qualms about the visual qualities of the production relate to the very erratic lighting, and to the adobe and conventional (but unnecessary under)lighting, usually evident in the scenes of greatest interest.

Apart from the mentioned inaccuracy, the fidelity of the production was im-

"...with perhaps a few reservations, I can go along with most of the superlatives"

A CHORUS LINE

RAYMOND STANLEY

A Chorus Line Book by James Kirkwood and Nicholas Dante music, Marvin Hamlisch lyrics, Edward Kleban. Presented by JC Williamson Productions Ltd (Ken Bridges, stage managing director) and Michael Lally (producer). At the Pic. Ltd in association with the New York Shakespeare Festival (Joseph Papp producer) and Pace Productions. Her Majesty's Theatre, Opens 21 May 1979. Original production directed, choreographed and designed by Michael Bennett (co-choreographer, Bob Avian, choreography and direction nominated for Australia by Raymark Ltd and Jeff Martin, supervising producer, Robert Lane and Paul H. Driscoll, Setups, Robbie Wagner, costumes, David V. Aldridge, lighting, Therese Mason, musical director, Paul Smith, technical director, Sue Norcross, orchestrations by Ray Scott, Shirley King, Jonathan Lewis, music supervisor for Australian production, Paul Hartog).
Musical direction, Angela Ayres, Tim Butcher, Leigh Chambers, Cheryl Clark, Ross Colquhoun, Phil Douglass, Camille Edwards, Pamela Gibbons, Shirley Stoke, Raymond Monk, Patricia O'Farrell, Scott Princeton, Marlene Randell, Joel Ringo, Marlene Rogn, Julie Sparer, Lynn Schlesinger, Andrew Stevens, Greg Stiles, Lynne Marie Stingley, Claude E. Strickland, Paul Tippins, Geoffrey Underhill, Karen van Niel, Jack Walker.

terrupted by a few pitiful raps. Tom Conrads' soprano Odile Horrocks seemed to have stepped straight from her previous studies of Lex Darcy in the company's previous production of *An Sporting Double*. The officers who first sight the Queen speak in much the same laid-back stage-Australian, and I felt that some more vigorous attempt rendering the language would have given the opening the desired conviction. Cloris Costello's rather magnified Olympia combined cockatooish cackles in her comedy with ridiculous sanctity in her manner, and I felt that the notorious laughter occasioned by her mad scene, in which her face was powdered white as a gargoyle, was displaced, especially as it carried the implication of the same "madness" as we see in Hamlet's earlier frayed madness.

Foolishly, the existence of the co-clauding women seemed retrospective to some more innocent earlier in the production, but I feel certain that the natural talents in comedy the best of the great here which Clotilde's cast is forced to share. A spacious and clear reading like this needs an appropriate space, and it is the greatest single obstacle to success for this fine company that there is no such space.

Rarely does a musical arrive in Australia which, having been showered with endless superlatives by critics and audiences alike in its country of origin, is obviously still set to repeat the process here.

A peak was set in the late 1950s by *My Fair Lady*, which ran so long in Melbourne that a second company had to be formed for Sydney. For the next decade, almost every musical brought faint hopes of being another *My Fair Lady* and, although some did quite well at the box office, the London-Los Angeles musical still provided the perfunctory.

Then, in 1968, came a very different type of musical. *West Side Story* was blockbuster No. 1, followed four years later by another musical with a difference, *Jesus Christ Superstar*. Now comes *A Chorus Line*, the one with perhaps the biggest reputation of all preceding it.

For months the publicity machine has been churning out stories about the musical, which in turn have sparked off others, and a *Chorus Line* fever has been in the air, reaching gigantic proportions not achieved by its predecessors.

Putting this publicity noise have been the focus of no lesser having an enjoy seat at any of its several American productions, the costliest musical in Australia is built a million dollars, three weeks of paid previews, and the taking at the box office of about a million dollars by opening night; but really it becomes the musical to see and the next step — overseas at least, and possibly here too — takes sold on the black market.

Finally comes the official opening night and with it either confirmation of all that one has heard about the show — or the disillusionment, or maybe perhaps just a slight feeling of disappointment. And all

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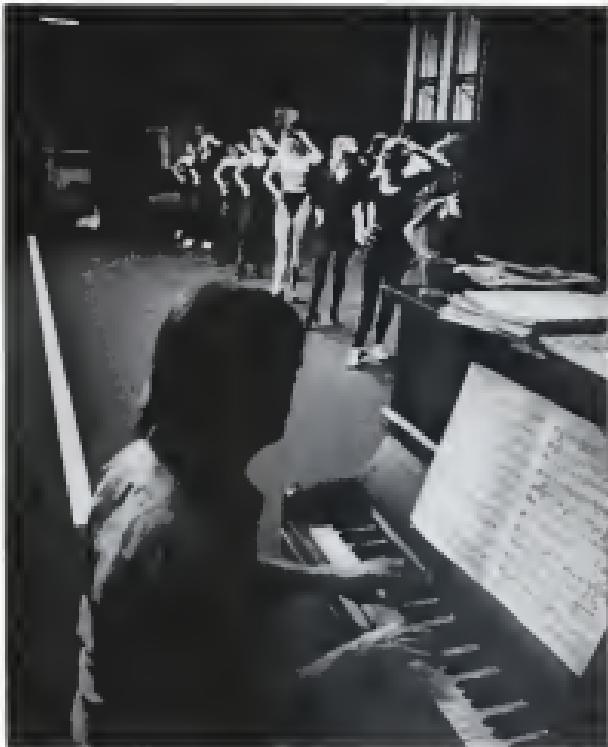
that, a more reviewer has failed to draw upon some of the superlatives already used to describe the show, or look around for a new angle, one of possible not yet covered. In the face of all one has heard, it is very, very hard to view it objectively.

One's first — perhaps over-riding — impression at the opening night in Sydney was the constant thunder of applause that echoed again and again throughout the theatre after each number. Surely one has never heard so much applause before on an opening night? Yet one of the management heads carefully admits it was not quite as great as at some of the previews, and director Jeff Berlin says applause is mostly always heard at such a pitch in all performances of *A Chorus Line* throughout the world — and if that is, then there must be something lacking in the performance.

By now the story of the show must be familiar. A Broadway director auditioning from an initial 24 for eight dancers to appear in a musical. Just what kind of a musical it is and what it is about is never revealed.

The dancers — who, as far as one can discern, in their dance-to-clock-work precision, at first glance are of near-equal talents — are each narrowed down to 17. Then come the somewhat harrowing moments, when each is made to relate biographical details and demonstrate his or her abilities.

At first one is awed by the talent on display and realize the enormous task the dancer has to face in making his choices. One watches points carefully, thought, and notes that one has the edge over that one in dancing, one performer can carry a tune just that much better, and another more personality, whereas so-and-so seems more interested.



And comes the question you have much in difficulty put on for the performances how rough let what a pain falls for do exactly can numbers fall short? An impossible job to convince the audience that the right changes have been finally selected — or is the director's judgement to be shown up, and this is all part of the play? On opening night I certainly did not agree with the director's final talents, line-up, not on the performances, given the basic fact this can all members of the cast measure their performances to the exact degree required? Perhaps this is why many who see the show overmuch maintained it could never be properly staged in Australia.

Miraculously, it does hold together in Australia and, with perhaps a few key insertions, I can go along with most of the superlatives which have been raised of the musical. In my opinion, though, some of the performances are somewhat muted by harmonic abilities not quite on a par with dancing and singing.

To me it is a moving show, however a somewhat compensated one. With its high-powered dance numbers, possible noise, superb lighting and resounding music effects, it is all calculated to hypnotise. Occasionally it fails, particularly around the

middle, which at interval might have elicited. There are, too, some rather shrillness moments — which would obviously have greater appeal in America — that could have been deleted or maybe combined with advantage for the Australian production. I particularly refer to the segments involving the homosexual, Paul

The final scene, when the 17 performers, plus the director and his assistant, Larry, dance swiftly around the stage in glistening stars, as opposed to their hitherto rehearsal clothes, is stunning, but appears to have little relation to the action which has gone before, except to provide a curtain call. Had it been the right firmly selected and supposedly showing them at a later date in actual performance, it would have been understandable. It does, however, make a definite high-level finale to the show, so one cannot really object. But for a musical, which otherwise is so realistic . . .

Just as *Hour and Jarus* *Cirrus Superior* have proved what are now some of Australia's leading efforts, so a few years hence some of our leading performers will prove the young points in their careers back to *A Chorus Line*. Of that I have no doubt.

With few exceptions, the cast possesses a very high level of talent indeed, but there

are two whom I would place above all others. One is Scott Pearson, who plays the dancer Zach, the pygmy-mister whose voice and personality dominate throughout. The other is Pamela Gibbons who has demonstrated before — notably as dumb blonde in *Yo Yo Honey* and later (in one she and Noel Purvis were the only good things about that abominable musical) — that she has just potential in the hard-hatted sheila. Now Gibbons can take her mightful place right beside Drew and Pearyman.

It is certainly going to be a tough job for the cast to keep up the standard of performances. And apart from those on stage, one must also pay tribute to the backstage workers, who believe that everything is working to perfection. Not every, one imagines, for such a show.

You, despite my quibbles, I really did enjoy *A Chorus Line*. It is obviously a great musical and can be highly recommended to all and sundry. I can't wait for an opportunity to visit it again.

A Chorus Line could well follow the procedure set by *My Fair Lady* and Godspell with the formation of a second company. Perhaps more importantly how is it going to affect the future of other musicals in Australia? After this show, it will be deadly difficult to promote others. What could possibly top it?

'Is this . . . part of some diabolical plot to prove that . . . Australian plays really are bloody awful?'

UNPRAIRABLE ACTS

OPPORTUNITY HIGHLIGHT

Unprairable Act by Colin Free Old Town Theatre Company, Paradise Theatre, Armadale, N.S.W. Opened 1 June 1971. Director, Peter Colquhoun. Design, Rodie Tait. Music composed by John Ross. *The Ultimate Diaries*, Colin Dorn, Pearce Park, Eric Hardwick, Wycliffe, King Gillette, Margolin, Belmont Phillips, Brett Stans Porteous. *Dr. Seuss' Sally Slay*, Catherine Weston, Michelle, Bass Bass, Chuck Steele, Porteous, Logan, Ben Heppner.

How is it ever possible to take *Unprairable Act* at the Tafe seriously, or to write about these two radio plays manipulating at the Paradise theatre?

Is this the Tafe's final death blow to the Australian play, part of some diabolical plot to prove that they were right all the time, and Australian plays really are bloody awful? It begins reminding me of the MTC "shameless theatre states" in Great Street last year, as an experience which appeared to be "unprairable to fail".

And yet it was only too apparent that all was not on the up-and-up, and the Tote really did think this was the best they could offer the patrons, and that at a time when Richard Wherrett of the National has gone on record as saying that the backlog of good Australian plays means the Nats can no longer hope to cope with problems.

With mounting disbelief, I read the programme notes and heard how director Peter Collingwood had written a very nice letter to Colin Firth, reading, "I don't suppose you're writing for them on that day?" It was as if 1967 had never ever happened at La Mama, the Prism and the old Nats, let alone the 10 years since that fine great flowering. Oh dear old Tote! Where have you been all the days of our lives? And what a tiny old croupier's beribboned body you turned out to be!

Anyway, as the story goes, Colin Firth returned and revisited the radio play, changed the roles round a bit, and, boy prima, the Tote had another taken Austrac session. How it does like one book!

Remember the old Australian play sessions when the audience turned up daily to take their medicine once or twice a year, and it was all paid for by the *Coburg Foundation*?

Or from a book, a load of cracking science-fiction melodrama, was the first of the double bill. It was about a technoid virgin called Myra and her telepathic dad called Chuck who once made love in the ruined quarters at Treow Springs, a top-secret U.S. installation built examining solar energy, now wrapped in 15 acres of plastic.

Chuck, supposedly dead, turns up as an amiable hooligan when Space Parasites does his best under the guise and the doctor, and there blues, as the acrobatic Seengals, that is until the character with mutant presence, snapping black-glove sexual acts with Chuck (絲りに this chick) seems anything as obvious as a *curse* to rescue Colin Firth plays the play drama on "An unanticipated interest in Seengals and Pro Art, and taken inspiration from Churchill's earth-wrapped scumbags".

"After that I need a good stiff whisky," said the man beside me.

"Hefferd was legit," said the man in the bar behind.

Luckily the audience fled back after interval for *The Ultimo Obituary* it wasn't! It was marginally better than *Dreadnought* but all those good actors acting their socks off, Reg Giffen, with a *Pyromaniac* dominion's laugh using every trick of an old pro to invent Winkerman, the ex-porno-writer's open-days, with some kind of wild, ravenous life, and Richard Phillips, giving the stock director Judge a Dickensian hand of energy.

But, mangled with "literary phrases", word-play, and clunky alliteration, it was all such mainly old-fashioned, mostly late-middle-aged stuff... "Gillies but for a smuggy behind the rotundas!"

How one longed for a Hefferd, a blues

or a Ramsay!

"Okay for a pleasant Saturday arvo on *Anodyne ABC*," said a friend.

But that of course that is not what the theatre is all about, and the ultimate absence is to think so.

Engrossing shows for the young and very young

PI PUPPETS AND PANTOMIMES

ALISON JUHLICK

BOB AND BOBBY: joint venture of glove puppets, shadow puppets, marionettes and block theater, devised and directed by Peter Williams, *The Puppet People*, Recording Hill Open House, Sydney.

POSSUM ISLAND: play (marionette); devised, directed and performed by The Puppeteers (Doris and Sue Sabine), Marion Street, Ultimo, Sydney. Little Red Riding Hood (marionette), devised and directed by Peter Williams, St James Puppetry Society, Jackson Wood, Crown Street, Margaret Street, Victoria Chapel, Prince William, Virginia Park, Perth.

DO YOU WANT TO PANTOMIME, devised by Julie Williams, PACT Co-operative, St Andrews' Church House, Sydney.

Puppets and pantomimes — two entirely different styles of puppet shows, both engrossing. *Bob and Bobbie* relies on music and movement, with no use of the spoken word. The pupping title tells us all the rest is that of those jolly Capuchins in the dramatic Shakespearian architecture using only strong and percussive) and the "story" in short term, very large ones retelling in black theatre.

The events in the life of the last two surviving married and dramatic nectar gatherers interrupted by a fierce storm, a fight against a praying mantis (its approach suggested by the use of a shadow puppet), the birth of a new queen and a battle between the two queens leading to the hasty departure of the old one. The movements of the puppets are expressive and the action is well matched to the changing mood of the music to convey a wide range of emotions.

One of the dangers of puppet shows is a tendency to a marching-story-line and many of dialogue. *Bob and Bobbie* avoids these pitfalls by reworking words and relying on pure visual images, backed by music. *Possum Island* needs them by using a known story and having most of its dialogue already provided, the same technique used by the Puppeteers in their previous show, *The Touchstone King*.

The plus of an exciting story for a puppet play doesn't fit any more simply that the puppeters are taking the story way out. A lot of prancing, edging and strutting. But obviously takes place, and the result is a remarkable adaptation of a difficult story. Questions might be taken to some of the elements chosen, but the main thing is that the story line is kept clear and

simple.

Puppetry good was the way the conventions of children's theatre were used to further the understanding of the story and not as distracting interruptions. The hand puppets have of addressing their audience, combined with the encouragement of audience participation, make it easy to bridge difficult gaps in the narrative and eliminate possible obtrusive parts and so make sure that even the very young get something out of the story. The two puppeters provided a convincing range of 13 voices for their marionettes and all the characters sing, dance and often talk.

Both of these shows could be enjoyed by older children and even adults, but *Bob and Bobbie* is obviously directed at the very young, simple and tidy. The basic fairy story is a good one for pantomime use, as both the dame (grandma in button gloves and red snit dress) to go with her eight sisters and the wolf who are both as in this job Peter Williams makes nearly a master wolf, with a touch of self-sympathy in the limp-wristed, Antennae-supported portrayal.

Williams' songs were fitted into the scenario, either straight or adapted — "Hernando's Hideaway" made a good slightly signature piece for the wolf. Some of the fairy business fitted in well with the action, too, as when the wolf's knocking at the door turned into a combination "knock-knock" and wolf chased around the auditorium after grandma.

PACT's "do it yourself" pantomime was something else again. It can't really be considered as a spectator sport, as the adults are regarded mainly as the means of getting the children to do the act (though's some pleasure can be gained by watching your kids overcautious around "winged horses" heads or combining to form dancing seven-legged spiders). The whole idea of the exercise is child involvement, both on a casual basis and a semi-permanent one, as all are welcome. The pantomime exercises are all under 20, most still at school.

The basic structure, similar to those is one, involves a set of oddly assorted characters in search of a pantomime, with the audience joining in all over the place (all in together on the same base floor) jumping, marching, galloping, holding up "and most unlikely plants, balloons which changed into an "instant inflatable plasma eggs", which they then fall upon and killed — all directed by a fairy with a whistle, a useful prop in the circumstances. Long for adult spectators, but obviously largely enjoyed by the participating children.

It would be interesting to know how much open-off there is from all this child entertainment, whether it all goes very far from the actual performance. Certainly, in our household, which is even normally a hotbed of do-it-yourself drama, drama and puppetry, these holiday pantomimes have provoked a theory of instant pantomime with recognisable elements from all productions, as well as distinctive original ideas.



From a theatrical point of view, a fine production — but . . .

DON ST DEACON

RACHEL HUBERT

Court Drama by Ted Teller. Tasmania Theatre Company, Theatre Royal, Hobart. Opened 18 April 1977. Director, John Lawrence. Designer, Sue Ward.

Loren Doherty, Karen Hamilton, Miss Murray, Clancy Williams, Jonathan Parker, Harry Scott, Professor Helberg, Raymond Dupare, Sybil Sorensen, Hazel Chapman, Vicki Johnson, Ross McPhee, Peter Pidder, Lindy Dahlberg.

One of the strengths a theatre company must take into account when selecting a play for production is audience taste or rather the change it may be undergoing. It may be found that the most useful analysis lies in viewing up changes.

An example is the recent production by the Tasmania Theatre Company of Ted

Teller's *Court Drama*. "You are still my reflection in a mirror," Raymond Dupare to Professor Helberg. Cliven Hamilton as Count Dracula

Teller's Court Drama

Drama was intended as an exercise in audience-building. It was intended to attract, in particular, young people who nourished by often questionable television fare, would want to see spectacular theatre with a dash of horror.

It did not quite work out as planned, and for, apparently, the two reasons. The enlightened young generation does not believe in vampires, while regular theatregoers in Tasmania apparently prefer to see more conventional fare, for instance, a good thriller by Agatha Christie.

It cannot be ruled out that another title could have made some difference. Counts from the region beyond Hungary have lost their appeal, their use as contemporary theatre could, at best, be that of characters to be ridiculed.

And there was evidence that the younger members of the audience saw *Drama* in this light. To them he was a figure of fun, a third-rate comic.

From the purely theatrical point of view



You are still my reflection in a mirror . . . Karen Hamilton and Cliven Hamilton

Drama was a fine production. Technically, it is a difficult piece to stage, with its meanderings and various locations and stage tricks.

It must have been quite difficult to engage an actor who also is an accomplished magician. Producer John Lawrence brought in Robert Green Hamilton and the choice was an excellent one. (Well) way through the Motor scene, Mr Hamilton became quite ill, but kept going with the help of antibiotics.

Clare Williams played Mina, and she proved another good choice. She was equally convincing in the new version of *Dracula*, the disciple of Jonathan (Harry Scott), and as one who comes close to being a vampire. Here, the much promised, almost seductive, moment later she was the furtive Mina.

Mr Hamilton played Dracula as big as the mythical dragon and when he raised himself, he did so with grace, producing noises which resembled those made by a Chinese of the old school "drinking" tea sharkfin soup.

Raymond Dupare, as Helberg van Helzing brought a touch of humour into the sterner atmosphere and his strong assured audience that justice would prevail in the end.

Sue Ward's set worked. It was of subdued elegance and provided a sense of space, much more, in fact than is available on the stage of the venerable Theatre Royal.



JANEEN WILKIN, MARGARET DE MEAUX

The transfer to an Australian setting 'was only a transfer in name'

THREE SISTERS

RUGER PAULVERS

Three Sisters, by Anton Chekhov, adapted by Ross Mirkarimi and Ralph Godwin, *Camberra Repertory Theatre*, *Theatre Three*, Canberra. Opened 11 May 1987. Director, Ross Mirkarimi. Set designer, Russell Brown; costume designer, Marianne Norman; lighting designer, Shandie Maggs. Cast: Margaret de Meaux, Maria, Jessie Margarets, Irina, Nastya, Nelly. Assistant Director, Warwick Dingley. Dr Charnovitz, Michael Williams; Nicholas Kravov, Steve Payne; Captain Semyon, John Hargreaves; Tolya Lark, Brian O'Brien; Mrs. Ranevskaya, Yvonne Annesley; Sonya, Vicki Long; Pad Markovna, Jennifer; Jasha, Harry Rosko; Karen Svetlana; Masha, Helen, Nancy, Anna, Ross Charnovitz; Oliver, Ben Maitland; Derek Norton, Subplot people, Megan Donnelly, Jason Blakely.

It is a bold and interesting move to transfer a play, and the old joke that a dacha is never a banya is just cynical old fun. There are all sorts of reasons for moving a play geographically, most of them to do

with audience familiarity in accent and context. I do not agree with the Ray proprietors however, that "the universality of Chekhov's observations of the human condition in *Three Sisters* has often been obscured by the play's specifically Russian setting". Unfortunate detail hardly ever obscures universality. If anything, it reminds us that people in different places, despite cultural customs, are really just like us.

But the transfer was only a transfer in name. It should have been done more radically, more wholly, not just by changing names, references to objects and incidents. The entire social context of the play has to make sense if it is going to work in Australia as an Australian play. This didn't happen on the *Camberra Ray* production. The soldiers of *Three Sisters* are of the same Russian stock. "We're superfluous men". For decades the military had been the repository of power, pipe-smokers, and all-fathered pliers-openers. Tales in the bush, their moustaches and Byrons hanging, appeared wholly foreign. If you are going to do this, then you must alter the script to fit the local context, or not do it at all. And the intention of the duch that is so important to the play and to 19th-century Russia just won't presented here to the same extent. It was obstinately wrong in the production.

While in parts the play struck a mo-

mento rhythm that is necessary in any production of Chekhov, there arose a glaring problem in the conception — or mis-conception — of personality here. The set was one of those optimising extravaganzas that place detail beside motivation detail without taking into account symbolism. Most of the latter half of the play, for instance, was played far to one side. At least this means that the people on the other side couldn't see. At best it was a stiff need.

The biggest problem with an alternative set of unique detail like this one is the acting style it imposes on actors. They tend to pose and overplay in that special kind of "stage realism" that is miles away from its model in life. This worked against Chekhov, whose aim it was to wrench the everyday-motivations from drama.

Strangely, in this production, the seven don't manage to establish themselves at any depth. This is sad, because the play is really a psychological portrait of them. Jeanne Wilkin as Irina, however, did enough to convey that spatial naivety and silliness that is in the character and in those Russian bensomes of that age. The other two sisters were too much alike in stage personality. That, I feel, is the fault of the director for not establishing them as separate and different from the beginning. In the end one of the sisters, Sophie Malfurche, ends up a wise old maid (wasn't it in the classic, also posed stiffly in the "weeping position", and all the subtlety went down the drain).

The cast was good, although this threw the balance of the piece off-target. Ralph Goldstone, a wonderful nervous myrmeky who caught fly off the headliners at any moment; Warwick Dingley, falling to pieces come by scene; Brian O'Brien, the teacher; worn quiet and funny; and Steven Payne — all absolutely created their respective generations of unassimilated urban middle-class, provincial ignoramus, students with good intentions and wild passions. And this despite the fact that, as portrayed, they really didn't make sense up there in Queensland. It is a tribute to actors and director.

The production attack the right tone at moments, but in general had an attempting concreteness about it. Where the mood should have been quiet, opaque frustration, there was often flatness. While some of the portrayals were lacking with life, others, especially two of the actors, were two-dimensional. And the costuming of the end worked against Chekhov's gift of letting us hang on to each other with nothing resolved given a mood. The sets were strong though. As of the play were called *Three Soldiers*.

'There is irony in the play . . . there is also a bitter anger and ugliness'

AMPLIFICATION

KATHARINE BRISBANE

Anamnesis by Jens Bjørnboe; translated by Nilsen Hause, Australian National University Arts Centre, Canberra, Opened 10 May 1977
Starring Roger Falens

Supporting Cast: Ulfur, Prof. Pernille, Eva Lundin, Anna Luoma, Margareta Wahl, Gunnar Frandsen, Mats Nisse Adel, Harry Schmid, Paavo A. Morris, Fagernestad, Valteri Sutinen, Paavo R. Mäkelä, Siiri Virolainen, O'Hanrahan.

Roger Falens in *Canberra* seems to have set out as a one-man crusade to raise the consciousness of theatre people and drama-going audiences to the work of some of the compelling writers in the contemporary theatre of which we are at present deprived by the language barrier.

A brilliant playwright and novelist, by one of those unlikely accidents of life Falens's special area of interest in language and literature are Japanese, Polish and Norwegian. His own writing is oddly influenced in form by the three cultures and his own native America. An example is his early play *Farsakirka*, chosen for workshopping at the recent Australian National Playwrights' Conference in Canberra. It deals by analogy with Japanese involvement in the Second

World War

For a national translation conference held at Canberra during May, Falens introduced to Australian audiences at the Arts Centre, the work of a stark Norwegian writer, Jens Bjørnboe. It is translated into unobtrusive, easily flowing English by Nilsen Hause. Bjørnboe died by his own hand last year. To judge from the brief descriptions available to us of the recurrent theme of social injustice in his work, the anger that informs it and the way he resorts to use images of physical violence to demonstrate indignation over the spiritual nature of man, one gets the picture of a searing, blood-like poet with a deep anger against the new and greater inhumanities that have arisen since the time of the great Norwegian dramatist.

A glimpse of the picturesqueness of Bjørnboe's life past at the small seaside of nature, his humour and irony, was given at the beginning of the programme with a selection of poems from his collection, *Søen, Himmel og Jord*. A handful of lyrical poems on the natural world is mixed with tragic statements about the good prison life does in men, a sombre-sentimental mother and a ballad of the North Sea in which a family, faced with the disaster of father dying at sea, resolves the situation by picking up a herring barrel for the rest of the voyage. Too late they discover that the barrel, stamped with the Herr's meatus, has been sold along with the rest of the cargo. Sadly they conduct a funeral service over 80 kilos of herring, while on the other side of the world a Hindu is executed for the mysterious murder of a man in a herring barrel.

This lyrical poetical work is an introduction to his play *Anamnesis*, which occupies the rest of the evening. There is irony in the play, and gorygory there is also a bitter anger and aghast.

Anamnesis is a weird setting in an operating theatre and we are introduced first to Birthe Luoma, who explains the privilege in store for us. This is to meet and observe at work the distinguished surgeon, Social Surgeon Professor Harcorpsen, "Wahl", and Supreme Court Surgeon Professor Pernille. Their job, we discover, is to "rectify" any unfortunate individuality which may be existing within the ideal well-ordered society, and they demonstrate their "psychosurgical" method, which is the play consists of caustics and leeches in the groin, and finally injections and amputations. Such is Bjørnboe's view of social democratic political and judicial systems.

A fine example of their ideal "normal" recipient is Adolf, who is put through a process of self-disenchantment and disenchantment until he becomes the mouthpiece of his interrogators. Sister Luoma remarks her consciousness of freedom when she and her lover discovered the erotic excitement of whispering subversive slogans to each other at the act of love. Bjørnboe's State, however, does believe (quite Trudeau) that it has a place in the batraces of the Hitler and Luoma and her lover are

seen and heard confirming.

Bjørnboe's anger is apparent, but it has the great dramatic saving grace of wit. His points are simple — how the enforcement of majority opinion is the corruption of the individual and how such enforcement can only be made through fear — and he makes them with the Brechtian method of repetition.

The telling central point is a moving contrast between two surgical managers who meet briefly in friendship. Their shy exchanges are brutally interrupted by her parents, who cross-examine them on politics and contraceptives. The scene is concluded by the same rite as the opening's interplay of innocence is completed.

Roger Falens has a good team of Canberra actors with which to make the play. Ken Cardman and Gary Pritchard play the statuaries, Luoma, Margareta Wahl, a nice comedy actress, plays Birthe Luoma, Harry Schmid is a decent Adolf and Michaela Sutinen and Marcella O'Hanrahan the leading pair of amputees.

The production is smooth and lucid. I would, however, question Falens's decision to retain the grotesque structures of the original work, as he describes them, in the interests of our own surviving sensibilities. He claims that kicks to the groin, pools of blood and severed limbs underneath the operating-table and circular saws in the hands of the surgeons, we would find comic, unaffected and a poor taste. And I am sure we would, as we would find grand guignol in poor taste and unsympathetic.

It occurs to me, however, that if the purpose of this angry playwright is to offend our taste, to tickle us into laughing at horrors, only to turn sick at the implications of our own racism. In this he has much in common with the post-war generation of German and Eastern European writers, directors, poets and painters, who have attempted through horror and savagery to confront us with that senseless path which was Europe's legacy from the Second World War.

Jens Bjørnboe's life and death seem to bear witness to the artist's responsibility for that legacy. An extract from his novel *My Wife Loved America*, quoted in the *Anamnesis* programme, is evidence of that:

"This is the world crisis today that policies have no relevance to what is human. The truth is that all our culture, all of European culture, is created by criminals, dictators, syndicates, the mentally ill, epileptics, manic subjects, homosexuals, or at any rate sufferers from tuberculosis! It is not the so-called healthy forces that create a culture. It is not the skiers and the gym teachers who create a culture. Moreover, in most cases, this "culture" is healthier than the usual, robust healthiness."

"Just as life itself, culture demands a species of melancholy and at least a minimum of despair in order to emerge, just as reproduction demands a ray of sadness in order to continue . . ."

Dark is the truth!"



Ken Cardman, Gary Pritchard

Playscript

THE FALL GUY

Linda Aronson



— it'll last.

Fiona

Gordon. You know what I do?

Sean What?

Gordon Get out. Just find your mate and disappear. Jack won't listen to you or anyone. The man you want him, the more he'll go his own way. No, take my advice. You disappear.

Sean What about Hughes?

Gordon What about him?

Sean Well he won't take any notice of me! If he would, we'd never have got in this mess on the first place.

Fiona

Gordon (drowsily) If I tell y'what, see if you won't persuade him, I will.

Fiona

Sean Why are you so anxious to protect Jack?

Gordon What's that gotta do with you?

Sean Nothing. It's just that... I thought you two had split up, that's all (Fiona) None of my business, I suppose.

Gordon You reckon we're a pair of nice boys?

Sean (nervously) No, I don't, actually.

Fiona

Gordon (drowsily) Listen, mate. What you see in Jack, man, is a dream. A half-mad, worn-out old dream. Well I know him better than I knew him when he could get up on a stage and have an audience eating out of his hand, when he'd walk into the postman club in town — not knowing a soul — and talk himself into a job. You'd take him to a party and he'd have the whole crowd in stitches just pulling jokes out of air. He walked into a room and a was... a was alive. You don't meet many people like that people you'd... He had something, I dunno... drive, power personality... well it's what you like — but he had it. He had it all right. And I destroyed him. (Fiona) See, he's finished. Burnt out. Nobody wants to know. Well he was. Just on the scrap-heap while I'm here. Not while I'm around.

Fiona

Sean But... he doesn't want your help.

Gordon No, he doesn't. but he'll have to take it. That's what he's gotta have.

Fiona

Sean What are you going to do?

Gordon It's up to you. I'm not looking for trouble. If you can tell your mate to stop doing... If not... I'll have him.

Sean You'd beat him up?

Gordon If I had to.

Sean You don't understand. Hughes doesn't mean... He gets caught up, he doesn't know where he's going. The damned rags.

Gordon Now listen. You eat your fish and chips and you go. You find your mate and you warn him all. Understood?

Then, right at each other, Gordon goes out to answer the door. Re-entered followed by Hughes. Silence. Sean keeps his eyes downcast. Hughes comes to Sean with those same words:

Hughes Well... What's that? The deaf-and-dumb Olympics?

Gordon Oh, sorry! You tell him.

Sean Hughes, if you don't give up this idea

of a partnership with Jack, there'll be trouble.

Fiona Maguire looks aquiver guiltily.

Hughes Perhaps I should go out and never return.

Gordon Come back instead — aren't you?

Hughes (to Gordon) Well, would you mind explaining just what this is about?

Gordon You know as me about... If you're making a deal with Jack, just remember you're gonna deal with Hughes.

Hughes Oh yeah? What is it, Winchesters at noon?

Gordon The best thing you can do is split your friend and go.

Hughes I seem here to do exactly that. As far as Jack is concerned, I'll do exactly what I please.

Sean (to Gordon). He doesn't mean that. Look.

Gordon (to Hughes) Listen, mate. I've got better things to do than beat up little pools.

Hughes Oh really? I'd have thought that was just your style.

Gordon (to Sean) You talk some sense into him. I can't. Tell Jack I'll drop back in a few days. (To Hughes) I'll leave you, the longer this goes on, the worse it'll get me.

Fiona Gordon runs. Sean keeps his eye downcast. Hughes opens the new bottle of whisky, pours himself a drink.

Hughes (drunkenly) The daily round of sex and violence. (Fiona) Maguire regards Sean. Well. Know I did you here. Suppose you're here to disconnect good old Jack.

Sean. Yes.

Hughes (angrily). Ah, clearing up after me again. Shattered episode that night. And it's such terribly bad taste. An clipped jerky phrase! "You said we, in this movement are not only concerned to combat misunderstandings about ourselves amongst the general public. We wish also to cultivate tolerance and understanding of others amongst ourselves."

Hughes (drunkenly) Satis. Satis a pleasure to make.

Sean Sean does a much better impersonation of you.

Hughes Ah yes. But then Sean does everything better than me — as you were so thoughtfully pointed out. (Fiona) Well, and did you enjoy your little chat with Sammy last night? That's where you were, wasn't it?

Sean I was straight to bed.

Hughes Even better?

Sean Of course! — I couldn't face going home last night, that's all. There was nothing like that.

Hughes Aw, come on! You can tell me! You always do. (Fiona) You coming home tonight?

Sean I don't know.

Hughes Well now, where are we? "Sean's indecent," I think. So, now we go on to "Sean pleading" and "Hughes dead", followed by "Hughes plays the buffoon" and "Hughes's gracious apology". That's right, isn't it?

Sean Wrong. "Hughes plays the buffoon" is usually followed by "Sean's capitulation".

Hughes is rather short.

Hughes Well, well, well! (Answers a prize-fighter's punch.) "Straight away, sorted too!" (Hughes looks around from behind.) "And it's Hughes, Hughes on the other side!"

Sean (confused). Jack's gone to get fish and chips. I think we should go before he comes back.

Hughes (and angry) "And O'Sullivan is returning" like a rotting. That fat old docent is creeping up.

Sean Gordon isn't. Staffing. If you're not worried about June, at least think of your own skin.

Hughes (looks behind).

Hughes Sean. I am touched by your concern. However, before I leave, I'd be grateful to know — just for accuracy's sake — where hell you'll be occupying tonight. I'm used to you disappearing specifically. I'm not used to you spreading your opinions.

Sean Hughes! Let's get out of here, please. Hughes (calmly) I'm not leaving till you tell me. Are you coming back or not?

Sean I don't know.

Hughes (angrily) Well decide! I take it in there were sort of turning point!

Fiona

Sean Are you serious about this business with Jack?

Hughes Oh, I see, a trade-off. You or Jack. My feelings or the feelings of some abuser old drunk.

Sean He's not abusive.

Hughes (laughs). He's totally egocentric, totally preoccupied with himself! Who else would have faith in a fat?

Sean Can't you pay him? Can't you see he's partly?

Fiona

Hughes (drunkenly and prettily). Yes. I can. He makes them want me. His functions of pay. He uses it. "I use me arm, I use me arm." Oh yes, he uses it all night (Shows himself). His whole career is based on the fact that an audience will pay a couple. See my rotted blouse? That's even better at than Jack, and that's what you subscribe to.



Sean (surprised, confused). Are you getting with me or not?

Hughie. The slave mentality! Sean's been sort of legislation went through and she makes charged? He's in his element. All he's got to offer is his bloody martyred (Chuckles briefly) — and his son's not Sean — did you know that? Sean gives a snort of exasperation at it. It's Syd! (A raucous laugh) Hell! Syd! "Are, g'day Syd!" (Comprehensively) Syd?

Sean (surprised, slightly) Oh yes and he told you that?

Hughie. Never mind who told me, it's true Sean (smirks). Just what is it that gets you about Sean? Hughie asks? He smirks?

Hughie. Am, you off' and shut yourself to some readings?

Sean. Or it's plain old simple jealousy?

Hughie. Look, do I look like, yeah, stop trying to psychoanalyse me. Every now I turn you want a report on triplets?

Sean. Most you?

Hughie. What, like? And so, last of life

"Sean the vulgar?"

Hughie. Yes. You know because I am vulgar. Vulgar, crass, bad mannered, lewdish — you name it. That's right, isn't it? Big, bad, immature Hughie. Well, for as long as you believe that, that's what I'll be. I've no doubts. Sean imparts to me well that nobody impersonates Hughie quite as well as I do.

Sean. So it's all a game?

Hughie. On the contrary, it's a deadly serious. I'd hoped you'd be sensitive enough to work that out for yourself!

Sean?

Sean (angrily). What more can I do, Hughie? I've offered to reconsider doing the MA, check in my career. I've offered to talk things over. I've put up with insults.

Hughie (sarcastically) *Ahhh!*

Hughie carries playing a male playing a continental rock impersonator mannering looks. Gathers his fingers to suggest baton-like etc.

Sean. Well, tell me!

Hughie continues his actua

Sean. Oh that's?

Hughie a tap

Hughie (angrily). Be what you were.

Sean. What?

Hughie. Be what you were two years ago. Sean is taken aback?

Hughie. Yes, in Tasmania. The Reasons holiday in Tasmania. That's about all we've got, isn't it? Are, you're changed. Sean is shocked ... ?

Hughie. You're hiding. Sean. Sean you get in with Sean and that covered. Group therapy and tolerance and stone-ground. Bloody hell. Christ, it's too early. That's the world out there — not some half-baked bloody test-book.

Sean. All of which means you're pitiful.

Hughie. All of which means you've spent just. Private, comfortable, easy, snug tolerance. Sociological excuses and assumptions as both sides. (Sarcastically) And you're such a wet bloke you're all such nice, reasonable, considerate, brave blokes. Make us ever need for each, each you? Confront yourself!

Sean (surprised, confused). To you? After that?

Hughie. Care about something? Do you really care about anything — apart from your bloody cancer?

Sean (quiedy, coldly) Like, for instance, me? You?

Hughie (sighs) Yes. For instance, me.

Sean seems internally

Sean (comprehensively). I grew up. I can't understand you at all.

Hughie. Having hoped for some sort of diversion, it has become frenzied, vicious.

Hughie. Only because I'm not a casuist. That's it. That's what I am, isn't it? Poor, confused, chip-on-the-shoulder.

Hughie. Well, I don't want your pissy professional compassion.

Sean. No, you're not enough self-pity to last you a lifetime. (Pause) Duly. You're the master. You're the macho. And you know what's unforgivable about it? It's boring. It bores me to tears. (Pause) I go along. Waste your life. Destroy yourself — far enough, that's what you want. But boom now as you find someone else to watch the show. Because it's so fat without an audience — is it? — to witness the tragic drama.

Pause. Hughie starts, poker-faced at Sean, suddenly moves stabbing himself, around and does an elaborate stage shrill at Sean's free. Sean and for a moment, then raises her hand unerringly. Sean remains unmoved.

Sean. Oh, get up, you exhibitionist!

(Hughie immediately re-assumes her death-pose.) Hughie, get up! (No response.) Will you stay being ridiculous and get up?

Sean turns away unmoved. Hughie raises her head. Sean turns around. Hughie unashamed drops her head again.

Hughie (shakes) Ooooh. Oh God ... my head.

Sean. Very funny.

Hughie I'm not kidding, Sean. I hit my head.

Sean turns Sean unmoved. Hughie remains unmoved. Sean begins to get nervous finally walks cautiously towards Hughie's head. Hughie remains unmoved. Sean begins to bend down.

Sean. Where?

Hughie suddenly *faucets* herself, *rhythmically* style around one of Sean's calves.

Hughie. Ha!

Sean. Let me go.

Hughie (surprised). Say you'll come back.

Sean. Let me go!

Sean attempts to break free dragging Hughie after him.

Hughie. Not till you say it.

Sean. Stop being so ridiculous.

Hughie. Say it. Come on, say it. Sean stops struggling, turns *perplexedly* at Hughie. Hughie remains focused on to Sean's leg. Sean looks coldly at Hughie.

Hughie. Happy, darling?

Sean begins to struggle again.

Sean. You stupid ...

Hughie. I'm not bringin' go until you say it. Come on ... say it!

Sean stops struggling.

Sean. How can this make any difference?

Hughie. Say it, come on! (Pause)

Sean (coldly) I'll come back.

Hughie (feels of fury) Shall we go then?

Sean (so abrupt). No.

Sean (so abrupt). You have absolutely no principles, have you?

Hughie. No, I was vaccinated as a kid.

Sean (coldly) What about Jack?

Hughie. Damn. Probably didn't have it in those days.

Sean. Oh, grow up.

Hughie. Well, for God's sake stop posturing. Look, I'll get Jack off. Okay?

Sean. Is that all you can say?

Hughie. Well, what do you suggest? (With thick Australian accent) Still the same, you're the victim of a postwar prick.

Sean. Most you put on that stupid voice?

Hughie. Dopey! Your cultural orange is showing.

Sean. Get off that!

Hughie. (Groans) Fuck right! It's an instant like this that I know he loves (Pounding around Sean and shouting very fast with a drawl accent and an imaginary burp.) You made me love you, I didn't wanna do it,

etc.

Hughie concludes the scene with a *loudly* *grate* and *overextended* *voce*. *An annunc* *food*.

Sean. Hughie, I'm not playing any more games. (Hughie turns *her* Hughie pretends to be a small *naive* *animal*) When you've started being so childish, perhaps we can talk.

Hughie. All right, what do you want to talk about?

Sean. You and I.

Hughie *grace*

Hughie. No, no, Sean, please. I know I'll be alone. Let a diverse one measure to thinking about us. Shouldn't that?

Hughie no in *pop* *postur* *posturing* Sean. What I mean to know. Are you going to persist in getting involved with characters like Jack?

Hughie (evaluating Sean's delivery) And are you going to persist, with the *macabre* *entanglement*? Hughie.

Sean. Oh no. No you don't. No continue. Hughie. Sean, my friend. And continue. A *discreet* *objection*.

Beth (offstage) All right, you *piss* *bastard*, I'm back. (Appears at the doorway, carrying two *darkboard* *plastic* *boxes*) Hughie. Ha ha! Ap, you want tell you out what I've cooked out! (To Sean) Had to get bloody *pasta* — *spaghetti* a rule long outside the pub-and-chip shop. (To Hughie) Ah, y'all bigger? No, it's *topless* *rate*. (Put the boxes on the side) Top bloody class. Part of all they *concoct* me, well as "Lugies and gentlemen, presenting the *concocted* *bastard*, Jack Harvey." All *know* how. Then I come dressed in *Peter Pan* *party* *clothes* — *maple* with a *wig*, *yellow* — and I start singing. (Singing and dancing) "All the nice boys love a sailor. All the nice boys love a sailor. All the nice boys love a sailor."

a sailor. Well, you know what sailors are? I've got to work on the dance routine, but you give me the general idea, y'know. Then I go onto the stage — just, The great broad you see. I start talking about how I lost my arm. Every night I used to pray "Please God, make me like Nelson." He went for a laugh. Sean and Hughes continue when Jack walks onto the stage.

Hughie (smirking): Terrible.

Jack (smirking): It's fucking fantastic! (Gets himself) Ah, you're bigger! Why didn't you tell me before? What was it?

Hughie: It's a cabaret job. As a dancer. Jack (knowing): Ha-ha! I knew it. I knew you'd turn out ugly!

Hughie: It's not bad up top.

Jack: Well, fix it up.

Hughie: Can you be ready in time?

Jack: Ready! That's Jack Harrop!

Hughie: I'll have to make a phone-call.

Jack: Well, you get on that phone, y'need to hurry.

Hughie goes to the phone and starts a march. Jack dances around, clapping and excited, whistling, shouting, "All the New York Love-a-Sister."

Hughie: Hello! Is Ken there? Oh Ken, Hughie here. Look, I phoned to apologize for not coming to help with the poster last night. Completely slipped my mind. Did you? Oh... Oh dear.

Yeah, well, phew. I can make up for it. What do you think of having some culture?

Yeah, I've got a friend who's a comedian.

Why not? Nonsense. All he needs is a place.

Jack: I don't need a place! I'll do it without, no warmth!

Hughie: Look, he says he can even do without a piano. Uh, don't worry, I'll see to that. How about...? (Doesn't catch) Of course I am. It's a surprise. That's the point... Look, leave it all to me. (Desperately) Yes, I take full responsibility. Just get the guys in round to clear a bit of space for him before they go off for their break... Yeah, that's all.

Jack: What time?

Hughie: What time do they break?

Okay. Oh and one other thing. Ken has to keep this under your breath, will you?

You'll ruin the effect... Terrible. Yeah. Be saying you.

Hughie hangs up,aphorisms at the piano.

Jack: Ha-ha! Come on, we gotta celebrate. (Walks to the table, opens the new bottle of whisky.) Chuck the old bottle off! (Pours two shots.) This is it! This is where the buck turns. Ha-ha! No stopping now, no!

Hughie: No way!

Jack (giving Hughie a glass): To partnership! (They drink.) Yeah, I'd work that act up... Tap dance... What time do you want me there?

Hughie: Ten. I'll meet you at the gates at ten.

Jack (surprised): No, damn bloody agents.

Hughie: I'm taking on something new. No distinguishment. It's been Jack and Gordon for twenty-eight years, so when Jack decides to go it alone, it highlights the pants off 'em. I'll show 'em I'll show what I'm made of. Here... what's the matter with you? You're chomping the ground.

Hughie stares at Jack for a moment, suddenly moves into almost hysterical high spirits!

Hughie: Me? I'm all right. I'm fine. (Jumping up) Come on, show me that again. What is it? (Dancing.) Tap, shuffle,

tap, shuffle, tap, shuffle.

Jack: No, watch like this. (They swap places.) Tap, shuffle, tap, shuffle, tap, shuffle. Ha-ha! You're getting it!

Hughie (laughing): No, then the boy!

Jack: Now your hands! Clapping in right arm against his left.) Clap. And clap, shuffle, tap, shuffle, clap, shuffle, clap. (Hughie is dancing, clapping his hands.) Faster!

Jack:

Hughie: And clap, shuffle, tap, shuffle, tap, shuffle, tap.

The dance becomes faster and more complex as Hughie and Jack grow increasingly high-spirited — Hughie, dancing round in circles and shouting encouragement to each other.

Hughie (still dancing): Music. Give me music!

Jack (dancing over to the record player): Ha-ha! We'll get it from

Hughie: Tap, shuffle, tap, shuffle, shuffle.

As Hughie dances, Jack turns on the record player and selects a record, then displays Wimpy's straw.

Jack: I'll put on some Wimpy Atwill.

Hughie (still dancing): Take it away, Wimpy! (As Hughie dances, Jack sets the record on the turntable, lowers the needle, removes the straw.) And it's — tap, shuffle, ring, ring, shuffle, shuffle, tap, shuffle, tap, shuffle, tap, Clap, tap.

Suddenly the voices of Jack and Gordon are youthfully clear from the record. Hughie stops dancing. Jack removes his Gordon's Voice. Is it going yet?

Jack's Voice: Come on! Come on, the money it was out!

Gordon's Voice: Ah, I can't.

Jack's Voice: Come on! Right — me, two there. (Singing.) Ah, we will get a barrel, a barrel.

(Recovering himself,) Jack likes off the record.

Hughie (surprised): What was that?

Jack (taking off the record): The record got mixed up.

Hughie: What was it, for God's sake?



Sean steps. Sean looks at Hughie.

Sean (slightly querulous): Stop pressuring me.

Peter: Sean give out. Hughie watches him go. Sean leaves.

Jack (off): Ah! Sean! (Appears at doorway) What's the matter with him? Get the boss?

Hughie: A subject for the textbooks, I'd say.

Jack: Ay?

Hughie (sharply): Ah, he'll be back. He always comes back.

Jack (going out): Bet bloody temperamental.

Hughie is left alone on the stage thinking.

Hughie: Fuck!

Jack (off): Yeah?

Hughie: Jack, could you do the act on your own, if necessary?

Peter: What?

Hughie: Could you do the act on your own?

Jack appears on the doorway.

Jack (surprised): What did you say?

Hughie: There's a chance of a job in

Jack puts the record on the table and begins flinging through the stack of LPs looking for the record he chose.

Jack: Just an old record — one I think they all know.

Hughie (sighs): You don't wanna hear that.

Hughie: Ah, give me an answer!

Jack: No.

Hughie: Looking round, *Jackie Come on What's Up* — that's it!

Jack: I'll find the *Winooski* instead.

Hughie: Looking up the *Winooski*, I'm going to lose that.

Jack: Put it down!

Jack: Searches at the record.

Hughie (anxiously): What's the matter with you?

Jack: I used to put it down!

This struggle over the record: *A dogged and frantic* *Piano*.

Jack: *Confidently*: *Every best thing that could be supposed to it.*

Jack goes and picks up his dress.

Hughie: Well, I'd — er — I'd better be off.

Jack (whistles): Yeah, I'll see you Saturday.

Hughie: Yeah? (Pauses) Yeah. Well, see you Saturday.

Hughie: *Piano*

Hughie (anxiously, shrugging): Ay, you forget the bloody piano?

Sig: *Record*: Looks at the pieces of broken record. Puts his glass on the table. Sets up the table or drops through. He is thinking about Gordon and the possibility of a reconciliation — the face representing *sadness*, *loneliness* and between them suddenly begins joining the pieces of broken record together like a jigsaw. Returns whatever he is doing and stops. *Gordon* slightly *Contented*, decoding slightly puts up goes to the phone and dials a number.

Jack (*Mutter*): Is that Danny? — It's your Uncle Jack here. Didn't you? Well it's a good few years since I saw you. How are you now? — Listen, son, in Gordon's poor Dad, there? — Ay, well you give him a message from me? — Tell him

(*Bloodied pride begins to assert itself*)

Tell him I'm mugged off 'leets with rebar rods at the scene, but if he wants to see me after the show I'm doing that Saturday night. I'm willing to talk. — Yeah, that's right — tell him to meet me at the theater — outside the main gate of the show — *bloodied pride* (*reassured*) — Oh, if he wants, he can see the show, it starts at ten. — Yeah.

You got that? — Right. — Don't forget, will you? — Be seeing you soon.

Hangs up phone at the phone, deep in thought. *Blackout*.

begin to play. In the darkness the set is cleared and a screen constructed like two curtains is pulled in rear the stage is gone at the set. Colored lights, glowing with the music, are projected on to the screen. *Jack* and *Hughie* enter stage-right in front of the screen. *Hughie* leading, showing the way. *Jack*, waving the curtains and other of the preceding scenes plus a dinner-jacket and a large, brightly-coloured bow-tie —转 around his bare neck. He has put on a false red nose and a wimp-like pillow close to his eye. In his right hand he carries a large paper flower. His costume appears haphazardly rough and ready. *Jack* and *Hughie* stop where the two parts of the screen meet. *Jack*, at arrival, *Hughie* does may-care.

Jack: Am I all right? Do I look all right?

Hughie: Relax. You look terrific! Magnificent!

Hughie makes a quick pass through the crowd in the screen withdraws, begins to dance in the music.

Jack (grinning *Hughie* the flower): Here take this object he says to *Hughie*. *Hughie* dances incorporating the flower into his dance. *Hughie* dances; *Never* played so much before. Always played the click. *Hughie* (still dancing): Ah, you'll kill 'em! You'll be a sensation!

Piano

Jack (confidently) bring that, can't say.

Hughie (still dancing): Ay, come on! You're not serious? A professional like you?

Jack (grinning that flower mysteriously realising): That's all I need, my bloody pride.

Many steps. *Hughie* appears slower. *Hughie* steps dancing. The light when stops leaving the room slowly. All from the front.

Hughie: Well, here we go. You ready?

Jack (softly purring). *Hughie* walks briefly disappears through the curtains. A brief pause.

Hughie (through a microphone over a burst of crowd noise): And now... (A loud intake of breath) ...dark presents an air of mystery. *Dark cat-calls* whistling etc. from the crowd. And now... folks, at great trouble and expense, we present the last and sensational only — dark Harvey!

Jack pulls his shoulders back. *Hughie* comes through the curtains, hands back a microphone. *Dark*, *parody*, *imitation* and *imitation* grow. *Hughie* (the flower) takes the microphone and makes through the curtains. As *Hughie* looks in amazed surprise at the flower, the lights change — to reveal *Jack* behind the screen. He looks to the theater audience, poised and ready to begin his act. *Jack* begins. *Hughie* shuffles his feet and laughs silently. *Dark*, it is far too raw for us and *dark Harvey* begins. *Hughie* facing the theater audience and holding the flower like a microphone begins to mimic *Jack's* routine, miming the song and dancing.Jack's steps in time with flow, as if to appear *Jack's* reverse entrance.

Jack (grinning): "All the nice boys leave a station!" (Bursts of laughter in the

down-half crowd) "All the nice boys leave a car!" (Laughter increases). *Jack* dances — and *Hughie* gives more *dark Harvey* (more). "For there's something about a sailor. Well, you know what sailors are." *Jack*, *confident*, continues the song and dance, going on to the second verse. *Hughie* does the same through mimicry. The down-half crowd is in hysterics. During the last few bars *Susan* (sister and friend) appears in the front of the screen, walks left the screen by *Hughie*, her watchful eyes. At the song conclusion, *Hughie* notices *Susan*. *Hughie* is delighted. They share a mother-son.

Jack: Hello, sailor!

Lionel:

Hughie: Hello, stranger!

No response from *Susan*.

Jack: Hello, stuck on sailors until I was the high — oo, you are right!

Lionel:

Susan (child): (His partner's son there. He is going to beat you up.)

As *Jack* gives her every hue, *Hughie* raises his eyebrows as if to say: "Is that all?" *Susan* holds out the flower in a comical placatory way.

Jack: That's what happened to my mom.

Susan: Didn't you just tell me? Her, looking down on Gordon — Gordon.

Jack: Every night, I used to pray.

Hughie: Come with me!

Jack: No, it's true! — Every night, I used to pray.

Susan: Oh no. No more blackmail!

Jack: Please God, make me like Nelson.

Long roar of laughter. *Susan* begins to do, stops, surrounded by the applause and laughter. *Jack* finishes his routine and busily leaves the microphone behind the scenes and makes through the scenes an aged, applauding and cheering *Hughie* (Suzanne). The lights change so that the curtain opens suddenly closed. *Jack* (to *Susan*): Ah! Ah! Ah! Did you see it? Did you see me? (To *Hughie*): You bastard! You old barge! Listen to it! Listen to it! I bloody killed 'em! I crucified 'em! Ha ha! (Smiling and singing) — All the nice boys? — Even forgot my Bloody flower? (Shows flower down) Ha! Did you see me? Did you see me? Did you see it when I said, "Please God, make me like Nelson"? (Smothered by *Jack*, *Gordon* appears stage right. Crowd noise have ended completely and the stage is brightly lit. *Hughie* is blind. I imagined "I fucking smacked out" *Jack*, *stage* smiling. *Hughie* catches on to *Gordon*. *Gordon* turns onto *Gordon*, makes over to the full of goodwill about *Gordon*) *Gordon*? Ay, *Gordon*, did you see it? Did you? (Looks away. To *Hughie*, smiling yet almost stricken with remorse): Ah... I've still got Jesus Christ. I've still got... (Laughs to himself). Gradually realize the others are already moving at each other.) Well, what's the matter with you? Affectionately pounces *Hughie* on the shoulder.) *Hughie*!

Hughie makes an exasperated face. *Jack* looks down. *Hughie* is *Gordon* and back to *Hughie* begins to panic.

SCENE 2

A moment of silence. A pop record — of the Finch Malvern type or machine

Gordon: He's a poet. He set you up. They all pooh-pooh down there. They thought you were some half-witted old queen (Jack is thunderstruck). Inspector Gordon is going. Power: Well, take him, go on. Ask him whether it's true. Jack turns to Hughes. Hughes: It's true. But so what? I give what I wanted, you got what you wanted. You had yourself if you stayed there. Power:

Gordon (moving as if to hit Hughes): You bastard! Jack (surprised, hitting himself against Gordon): You touch her and I'll ... I don't need you to fight me bloody bitches! Power: Turn to Hughes! And you? Are you? (Hughes pulls off the cap and the false nose, throws them on the stage.)

Power: Gordon: Come on, I'll run you home. Jack: Stay away from me.

Gordon: Jack, this is nothing, forget it. Just a crowd of kids, bunch of Bloody queens (To Hughes) I hope you're happy now. Make your day, you little bastard. Hughes: Ah, Gordon, you're such a hero, such a good man.

Gordon: Don't push me. Gordon moves forward as Hughes runs back to Jack. Gordon: Jack. Next week I've got a date. The big one. Carly's coming, and I'm bringing some extras, ladies from the show. If it goes off all right, it's the contract with Carly, for TV. I can get you on at the club, too, so they can see you are your worth. You could even do that. That's upper crust (Power: Jack walks his head in fury) Jack, it's all I can do (No response). Angry: Well, what else you gonna do? Spend the rest of your life playing dog-eat-dog in little pools?

Power: Jack: Maybe I'd just prefer that — to working with you.

Power: Jack begins to go off. Hughes (announced): I tell you what, you'd make a fortune.

Jack: power for an audience, goes. Gordon starts after him.

Hughes: Well, you was some, you have more.

Gordon: Ah, you an own hell of a tourist.

Hughes: Ah, come on.

Toms to Sean: Let's please well then. Gordon: Ah yeah, pretty happy now. You good. Make your bloody day. Destroying a delicate old couple.

Gordon: no response from Sean. Hughes begins to walk away, past Gordon.

Hughes: Don't give me that, methinks. I'm not the one who walked out on him.

I'm not the one who ditched him after twenty-eight years.

Gordon punches Hughes in the face. Hughes reels back, tried to be fair. His nose begins to bleed.

Gordon goes off after Jack. Hughes grows gradually colder and sterner. Hughes stands motionless for a moment. His blood from his upper lip seeps into the floor. Gordon thoughtful, dejected.

Susan (softly): Are you all right?

Hughes looks up, looks away.

Hughes (relaxedly): Not really, but I'll answer.

Susan: Why were you a doctor?

Hughes shakes his head. Light is gradually fading. Hughes turns looks wearily and questioningly at Sean. Power: Sean turns begins to go.

Sean: Well.

Hughes: Sean?

Sean: stage. Stage. Power: Turn to face Hughes.

Hughes: Are you staying with Sean?

Susan: Yes.

Hughes: I was thinking, if I got a job, I could support you. Leave you free to do the MA.

Susan: You wouldn't be any different, Hughes.

Hughes (still suddenly): Well, I might have a broken nose.

Then, stare at each other. Silence.

Gordon, on a follow spot, speaks on the other side of the stage, carrying a microphone and singing. *Side by Side*.

Gordon: Thank you! Thank you very much, thank you! (Holds the hand up for silence) Ladies and gentlemen, also of you will have recognized that song. It belongs to a very special place — a name of mass ladies and gentlemen, I present the one and only Carly Mason!

Jack comes through the doorway slightly drunk. Gordon leads the applause.

Jack: Good evening, good evening, one and all.

Gordon: Oh yes, man, all right?

Jack: I'm right. Right again.

Gordon: Well, I'm gonna leave you to it, Jack.

Jack: Good as y'is! Let's have a big hand for Gordon Bobbi! (Gordon gives a smile) Well, come on! Give her a clap — not give her the clap dear. Sean? No? Where do you think you are — the Opera House? (Jack urges the audience to applaud. Gordon slaps Jack, on the back, and runs off. Jack watches her go.) You're a good State, Gordon. A good bloke. He's a big night for Gordon tonight, you know. A — very — big — night. Why? You ask me why? Because here at that silly audience there are — ticket scalps. My outfit. Now, the next question you ask yourself is: "Why are there ticket scalps?" Why are there ticket scalps? Because, if this show goes all right, good old Gordon gets a TV contract. Soild's here a fat Gordon! A big hand for Gordon Bobbi! Come on, if you don't wanna give them a hand, how about me? I could do with a hand, couldn't I, don't? I could do with one! (The atmosphere grows uncomfortable. Jack turns around at the audience) All right then, you don't wanna clap? You don't wanna clap. Your decision, an' I wouldn't wanna force you. None a you. Fuck you. That's like the one about the virgin with three daughters, Fuck, Hope and Charity. He rolled up in an instant change, his charity began at home. See, Gordon said to me, "Jack, he said, "Jack, I want you to be in on this. I want you to be in on this!" Now, I don't why. No point in talk-

ing me why. Because Gordon thinks I'm a no-hoper. You know that? A no-fucking-hoper. What he forgot was, I don't take that. I don't take that from anyone. (Looks up at the spring-dark audience) I fucking hopped up there doesn't know what to do. Go on! Fuck me out, I don't f' Ab, don't. No, but Gordon didn't like being a no-hoper in one way, you? He thought. Memphis). He thought it wasn't good enough for him. Thought it was. (Opening up the eyes and grinning at the audience) I thought it was a bit ... um ... like. So he checked in an Checked out in (Giggles).

Power: Gordon leaves at the doorway.

Gordon: Jack, come on.

Jack: It's Gordon. Let's hear it for Gordon! Gordon's where I imagined of acting like a p***t (Flattered): I warned you, didn't I? You don't play funny b****ers with me, mate!

Gordon and Power regard the microphone. Gordon: Jack!

Jack (to audience): Yeah. You know I did a show for some people. For a little boyband who wanted me to be a p***t (Gordon grins broadly round at audience). Gordon comes forward and grabs the microphone. Jack, stronger. (Laughs) I Am, of course. Guy don't wouldn't say out of it. Could y'is? Ah no. Gordon had to teach him Bloody one in. he had no. Fighting Bloody battles. (Jack snarls at Power) I Am. Him and his wife and (looking at a man in the audience) his Bloody mate Carly Mason! (Shows right group) That's right, mate! You try and get me off!

Jack: You try and get me out the way! That's what they all do, that's what I worry (Gordon has dropped back). You know what? It's like not be able to write your own name? You know what that's like? To get a big contract and sign your name like a ten-year-old child? (A tape of a three-part band 'debtly' playing. When you're Sodding' begun) That's right! (Cries myself!) That's what you do to a professional! (To audience) You bastards! I'll name you dead! I'll play you! I'll maulcum you! I'll fucking maulcum you!

Blackout. Silence.

Mick Rodger was educated at the University of Adelaide and Victoria College, and he graduated with first class honours. While at university he was director of an actors' and directors' workshop, which led to his training under the English ETV Reporter Theatre Trainer Directors' Scheme. He then worked extensively as a director at Brighton Theatre and, for a time, as artistic director of Open Space Theatre with Charles Marowitz. For three years he ran an amateur theatre company, the Drama Theatre Company. The company toured into inaccessible country areas and performed in non-theatre rooms to people who did not regularly go to the live theatre.

In 1974 he returned to Australia at the invitation of the Melbourne Theatre Company to direct the Australian premier of Peter Shaffer's *Eccentric*. He moved on to direct Congreve's *The Double Dealer*, *Henry VIII*, *John the Beggar* and Molière's *Alceste* for Marion Simpkin. He became theatre consultant to the Aus-



tralian Council for the Arts in 1976, he moved to the theatre to direct *The Crossing of Nygara*, again for the Melbourne Theatre Company.

For the past year he has been working as a free-lance director in both Melbourne and Sydney. Last September he directed Jack Hibberd's *A Taste for Money* for the Old Tote Theatre Company, followed by his own adaptation *André and The Countess of Lovelace* for the Melbourne Theatre Company. He has just finished directing *The Fall Guy* in Melbourne and is currently working on a production of *With Ours* to be staged in the York Theatre at the Seymour Centre for the Old Tote in June. After that, he returns to Melbourne to direct David Raksin's *Askes*.

Mick Rodger is also a playwright and has had two plays performed in Melbourne and Sydney, *Playhouse* and *The Judging School*. He has just completed a full-length play called *The French Dog*.

THE FALL GUY

A director's casebook of rehearsal

by Mick Rodger

Noel Coward once said, "Never complain, never explain" or words to that effect. It is an adage that I have tried to remember, particularly when I am on the heels of getting one part. When a production is working well, a chemistry often develops between character and cast. It is close and undefinable. I suppose it is based on a mutual respect, pleasure and trust. To go into print describing the minute details of that chemistry seems like a betrayal of that trust. It probably is not, but it feels as though it is.

A theatre casebook is usually objectively written by a third person, a spectator outside the theatre of conflict. It is a surprise, then, to be writing one's own. How can I be objective? I admit, as I write it up?

HISTORY

My first encounter with *The Fall Guy* goes back to the 1976 Canberra Playwrights Conference, at which I was involved as one of the three directors publicly workshopping new texts. The play was given a public reading only. It was not workshoped. It should have been. Nonetheless, I felt sure that the play would not have received a production, or at least not so readily or so soon, had it not been accepted by the Canberra Theatre Board (Australian Council of the Arts).

When I first heard the play, I recognised its (then) unusual potential. I had no gain or favour. I was particularly pleased when John Sennett asked me to direct

the play for the MTC, for I consider that over recent years that company has displayed an impressive record in uncovering new Australian playwrights and promoting new Australian plays. I was delighted, too, because the play seemed to offer me a strong contrast to the work I had recently been directing (for example, my own adaptations of the classics, *Greys of Flanders* and *Mansfield's The Game of Love and Chance*). I relished the idea of working in depth with a small cast on a new play with an inherently Australian setting.

CASTING

With *The Fall Guy* I felt that I already had some sense of the characters I was dealing with. Jack, the embittered, belligerent, self-pitying, aggressive and lead-marching drunken refugee from the fast-disappearing world of coalmines. Gordon, his apparently berefted, possibly dead, probably illegitimate partner for 20 years, Higgins, the high-energy, cynical, vulgar, exhibitionist counterpart to Jack in a jaded and Sans, but equally undiscerned, "analysed" homosexual partner.

I first decided that Norman Kaye should play Jack. He was the original reading of the part in Canberra. I had sensed his understanding (even then) of the comic and tragic dimensions of the character and his own aggressive energy as a performer. Stephen Oldfield would take Sans. He had originally played the boy for me in *Eccentric* and I knew that he had a presence and

audience on stage which could silently speak between the lines of the text. Unfortunately, of course, I was already beginning to compensate for what was missing in the writing of Sans, which became more apparent in rehearsal.

I found the other two characters more difficult to cast. Eventually I selected Merryn Drake. She had a quality which I regarded as indispensable for anyone to play Higgins: an intense passion as an actor and a robust physicality on stage. It is this quality (polished and developed in rehearsal) which has given her such outstanding notices for her performances. Gordon was the last and trickiest to cast, perhaps because he is the least specifically characterised in the script. I needed an actor who could, in performance, be physically threatening ("the brawler"). Jack refers to, or wants, charming. Sessions with song-and-dance experience would not come across, I thought. I found such an actor in Terry Donavan.

DESIGN

I made a conscious decision to design the play as well as to direct it. I wanted to keep the whole production small (after all, it was a very small cast to begin with). By designing and directing I could keep a totality of concept and also change the design immediately and painlessly to accommodate what the actors discovered in rehearsal. I often think that, if we work back-to-front in that regard, the design should ideally



"Healthy mutual self-criticism and challenging of each other's ideas"

stage after a long rehearsal process, not to sit and stand before that process begins but the conveyor-belt rolls on... Time and money seldom permit such creative leisure.

Although the play contains several scenes, it is not in, and of, itself, naturalistic. It needed no detailed and extensive notations in the set, merely a suggestion here and there of what was empty space. I am used of elaborate and expensive sets. As a director I now much look more towards the empty stage and the bare board on which actors are creatively sculptured out of light and then called to play their part.

It was not surprising, therefore, that the set for *The Full Grey* emerged as skeletal, even skeletal.

RESERVATIONS AND RE-WRITING

From the first time that I heard the play read in Canberra, I held certain reservations. In particular, the characters of Sean and Gordon seemed too withdrawn. At times they were mere "fools" in the comedy of Jack and Hughes. Similarly, the end of the play, from the beginning of the scene in the gas station, was, for various reasons, unsatisfactory. In the second draft which I subsequently read at the MTC, various cuts and additions had been made, in particular to the end of the play. I still, however, found the latter weak — and unsatisfactory in new form.

This second draft had the Hughes/Gordon

brawl and the Hughes/Sean confrontation occurring simultaneously with Jack's gas-station robbery. More than anything, I was afraid that the divided focus would confuse the audience's attention. I discussed the problem with the playwright, who then provided me with a third draft in which the various events at the end of the play occurred sequentially rather than simultaneously. It was a marked improvement, but I still had misgivings. Ultimately I decided to go into rehearsal with this third draft and to see what developed when the actors began to work on it.

REHEARSAL

The following is taken practically verbatim from my notes made during the rehearsal process:

DAY 1: Monday, 28 February 1977
Production meeting in the morning. I ask for follow spots in performance to create lighting of "miserable" and "club scenes" and fluorescent strip lighting over stage to contrast and give depressed air to interior scenes. I stress need to keep spheres open (particularly staging of last scenes) while actors discover script in rehearsal.

Fist read-through in afternoon, followed by discussion (playwright present). High level of enthusiasm all round and some good ideas floated. We begin to taste some rhythm of the play. Good start.

DAY 2 Tuesday 1 March Terry unavailable for rehearsal, so we start with

central pub scene. Good scene to take at random because we immediately discover characters. I stress don't want in "block" anything yet. Let's just move through play and find out. Toolkit subject and see what it suggests. Murray and Stephen take to dialogue immediately and spontaneously. Scene for motives and reasons goes surprisingly deep. Characters very clearly emerging. While play goes much further than I expected to soon.

DAY 3 Wednesday 2 March Some process on lines on last and first scenes of Act II. Show descriptive movement through scenes. No attempt at stage. Again a series of opening stand-up comedy routines until Jeff Pritchett has choreographed dance (delighted to discover he's doing it), already giving it a context. Norman making great beauty out of Jack's desolation and cruelty. We also recognise Jack's vulnerability. Laura's violence and aggression in all characters emerging and discussed. Energy and enthusiasm high. All lines growing.

DAY 4 Thursday 3 March We tackle long opening scene of Act III, moving slowly, walking in, throwing up arms. We run (walk) through whole play up to end of Act III. Scene 7. Discuss glottalings of overall shape and overall character development. We have peeled a number of layers off the text, peeled motivation, exposed what characters really saying to each other, identified where light and shade will be ultimately necessary in mood and pace. Agreement that script is extremely peppered with stage directions, they lie it down too much at the stage





Most sort out the fundamentals from the general.

DAY 3 Friday 4 March We extensively explore the last quarter of play. Unconscious feeling that gay men let play down. Up to this point everyone had enthusiasm about dialogue, characters, stage and humour in play. From this point on, a feeling that the script changes style, becomes more tame, even sentimental. Too tame, too cryptic. Not connecting any more. Long discussion follows. We examine alternatives. Wouldn't it make more sense if Jack was not cut-off at the stage by gay audience, but accepted, even applauded? What effect would it have on Jack? On the other character? Only the playwright can answer that. We decide to return to working in detail on earlier parts of play while I consult the playwright regarding the last quarter.

DAYS 4-5 7 to 11 March We work intensively on Act I and Act II, Scene 1. As character strongly emerges, so we make joint decisions on costumes. (This is longer than putting the car before the horse). The dances are slowly (painfully at first) choreographed. The perimeter stand-up routine to be roughly worked. I am reminded of my own experience of playing parts and working men's clubs in England. Plans made to have Murray (an accomplished pianist) put down on stage, in a studio, piano version of the two songs.

A lot of hard work is done scene by scene, day by day. Progress slow but sure. It solves actors' problem of not knowing final outcome of the play leaves a lack of direction. No light is seen at the end of the tunnel. But still a reassuring ensemble feel in everything. Highly mutual self criticism and challenging of each other's ideas. Most one Pab scene in particular takes on extraordinary natural air of life when nothing is the significant or pointed. I know it's horribly slow and un-dramatic (wouldn't hold an audience), but it's the right feel in this stage.

DAY 6 12 Friday 17 March Morning Playwright free from Sodberry and goes to rehearsal. We run (stagger) through all that we have rehearsed so far. We discuss and discuss.

Afternoon. We sit down and discuss, for several hours, the problems of the last quarter of the play. We explore a playwright our imagination and creativity. We explore how could Jack be applauded by the gay audience? Playwright makes the idea very negative at first. We try to comprehend. My worry (and the playwright) is that it might become another play a different play. The problem, a return to one, must be solved within the parameters already established by the text. Gradually we all collectively lead our way towards the truth.

It's exhausting but immensely productive. It's then that I'm glad we've developed such an ensemble in the past two weeks. Everyone rooms were out but not deleted.

DAY 7 Monday 18 March The half way mark on rehearsal game. The playwright today provides us with another ending. We move, test and discuss it. It seems to work and extinguishes most of our problems. Involves use of song (as suggested by one of the actors last Friday). I'm not keen on resolving a fundamental writing problem by production gimmicks, but at least it helps distract focus of attention and provides chance for continuous action. Dishes that jerk, inter-cut scenes to keep pace with as it progresses.

DAYS 12 and 13 25 and 26 March We are now able to look closely at Jack's final monologue to the audience. That has remained largely unchanged from beginning of rehearsal but left unchallenged because it set out events of gay scene. We discuss content and intention. Does Jack finally break down or is it a pronouncement?

DAYS 14 and 15, 17 and 18 March Rehearsal, the resolution of Sean/Brighton

rehearsing makes him less willing and the actors. They find it awkward. We question the playwright. Is the audience to think the relationship will break up or continue at the end of the play? The playwright wants it to be ambiguous. Sees to me that if they can together after their final love there is no ambiguity we assume they stay together. I only briefly ask the playwright to think about it over the weekend.

Sunday 20 March Final reconciliation in tranquility. Three quarters of the rehearsal period has now gone. From making exceptionally fast progress at the beginning of rehearsal we have now regressed to a snail's pace. I feel relieved and pressurised. We're not as far advanced as we should be at this stage. Is it that so many changes and constant changes in songs and action have disconnected the actors? Nothing solid to hang on to? Outstanding problems need be resolved quickly now, and immediately, if we are to be ready for an audience in a week. The process of leaving options open must now change to shutting and holding the doors. I decide on a radical change of direction, naming it *liveness*.

DAY 21 Monday 21 March The playwright gives us a fresh version of the Sean/Brighton sequence which involves instead of Sean with Mynn, one of the two powerful off-stage characters of the play. After brief discussion, it is implemented. It incorporates suggestions made by the actors. I ask the playwright to desert us until the following Friday so that we can forget, temporarily, about script and re-writes, and concentrate on putting up the performances in a public level.

We begin with a straight run-through. That immediately identifies where we are going wrong. We are too consciously stopping to regular the 'significances' of the script we have so carefully drafted. Passus have become too intelligent. They are holding back the pace. The heavier aspects

of the play are weighing us down, the story and humour have all but gone. With them the lightness and shade. Everyone is playing on one continuous note. No sugar and rumour themes, no change of mood.

An technical director, I look the return to conduct a run-through a break-neck speed. "Just play the lines," I say. "Don't stop to think about what it means." The comedy doesn't work. It is thwarted only by the depressing atmosphere of dimming lights and the passing chain of an empty stage where the voices booms up into the roof and are lost. It shows us how much the scenes can shrivel when given attack and speed. The inescapable pause immediately precedes us with our clamps of need.

DAY 17 Tuesday, 27 March Back in the rehearsal room, I begin at the top of the play and slowly move through it, reworking and developing the comedy and lightness instead of shooting holes at each other, the characters and the same time to joke at each other's expense. Incredibly we have potential audience laughter while retaining the significance of the play. Comedy is not frivolous but the more serious any human beings have of an ongoing problem. I ask Merrin to play a whole scene as though it were dreary-duty, income drawing from comedy. The audience works immediately it is very funny, but also extremely easy to listen to. When actors continually shout, it is not easy to hear. The correct path is the way to what is now becoming a radical change of direction. Underplaying becomes the keynote. Suddenly, as a result, what each character says becomes clearer, more genuine and thus more 'significant' in the final sense.

Similarly, I ask Norma to experiment with various levels of darkness for Jack. How dark can he become without being us or losing his own articulation as an actor?

DATES 18 and 19, 23 and 24 March The process goes on. Now it is a race against the clock. Will I have enough time to revise all the play in this fashion with the actors?

We take another look at the Sean/Hughie final scene and make some alterations and minor cuts.

I stress to the actors that, from a technical point of view, they should always try to tie emotional reaction and verbal response together. To react, and then say the line, takes longer and produces more pauses. That in turn drags down the pace.

DAY 20 Friday 29 March Despite sudden change in direction of past week, I sense that we all feel as though we're now finally emerged from that dark and abusive tunnel into the sunlight.

DAY 21 Saturday, 30 March Final run-through. As the task of revising my metaphors, I find as though we might have now turned into the home-strength Production weekend. Over the weekend the production is helped, in particular, by a very astute understanding of the play's needs and a creative lighting plot by the MTC's lighting designer, Jamie Lewis.

Tuesday 29 March The production gets an enthusiastic response from its first public showing. They are a private audience. I have asked the audience to play a tight and fast, relying on their own energy and enthusiasm to push the evening through. They are surprised by the frequent laughter and don't have time to stop for it.

Wednesday 30 March Post-curtain on the previous evening's performance. Our change of direction in the past week has been fast. Go into the second private performance relaxed and more duched. I say "Play for every ounce of comedy that is legitimately yours, even at the risk of losing pace. Re-discover the play's manners through performance tonight."

They do so and, although slower, the production recovers a much bigger and more positive response.

Thursday, 31 March Tonight we officially open the play. The two reviews have brought us a lot; we need a balance between light and dark, playing and being confident enough to stop and enjoy the comedy, involve the audience and finally feel the dramatic moments without losing grace and energy.

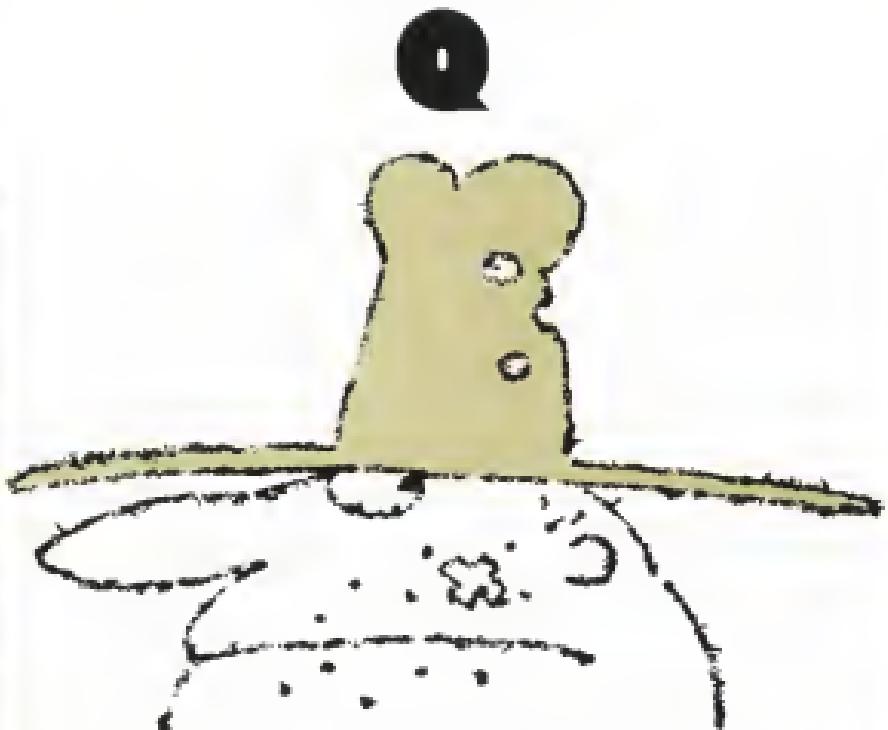
It's the half-hour call and I feel that my job as a surrogate audience is over-achieved again. But the final performance is really only the beginning.

CONCLUSION

If we are to believe the critics, our peers and the public, it seems the final product on stage worked exceptionally well. But I personally believe that there are still flaws in the script. The characters of Sean and Gordon are underwritten, they are only convenient adjuncts to the protagonists. The giv-and-take situations scenes are still insufficiently resolved within the terms established by the earlier parts of the play. I am also inclined to think the sexual/bromantic relationship is too sketchy and unplayable. The play was made to work for those people who performed it, the production at that time. A group of dedicated actors overcome their problems with humour and resourcefulness.

The songs are strong in art, dialogue and reality. It shows a playwright who is inexperienced but who has understood values and purpose. It would be a pity if such qualities were left unfulfilled. It would further be a pity if the playwright did not rewrite the last 15 minutes of the play.





Two hearty cheers for an exuberant QTC production

THE LAST OF THE
KNUCKLEBONES

RICHARD FOTHERINGHAM

The Last of the Knucklebones by John Power. Queensland Theatre Company at the QFC, Brisbane, 22 June 1977. Director, Jim Mincham; designer, Peter Under; stage manager, David Craven; Musical Dir., Phil Moore; House, Julian Johnson; Stage Hand: Veronika, Tessa, David Fleetham, Tom Peter Koska, Vicki, Rose Fair; Merchants: Douglas, Hodge, Tugan, Bass, Cindy, Carl, Ron Layton; University Women: Mervyn.

Hi Folks! Welcome to the Wild West, where the crazy William Holden instance of Dan Cuddy represents the ageing law man, where his crusty deputies could fit a Grand Canyon with empty beer cans, and where a man's don't is as big and as dangerous as a thirty dollar. With Sylvester Stallone as the new scrappy

who's out to depose the sheriff, and a cameo appearance by Bruce Lee who parades in with a neat karate chop, even the day for old W.H., and takes the first place out of town when the deputies find out about his big payroll job Don't miss *The Last of the Knucklebones*, on tour throughout Queensland and still playing in Brisbane (aud \$8 for bags/gag).

There's a serious point to this flippancy. *Knucklebones* is a play by John Power (presumably based on his own experiences), and the character of Monk has similarities with his biographical sketch set in the backdrops of a mining camp in the north-west of Western Australia. Nine men, no women. The plot builds towards a resolution which is plausibly silly and along the lines of my first paragraph, but along the way it manages to make a number of deeper thrusts into the psychology of Australian men-without-women. It's been given an exuberant production by the QTC, which I saw at Gympie at the start of its country tour. The lead gallows-hinged one at the audience of 50 were exuberantly male, and it's the sort of play that needs massive frontal confront to give it necessary counterbalance to its indulgence of the

Australian male myth which such a milieu evokes. Such a point of view might well dominate the play as the sublimated behaviour of adolescent roughnecks. As one who has worked in such camps and who now spends much of the year performing plays on them, I'd like, however, to pursue a different line of critique by looking at the play in the light of a society it knows.

Knucklebones, looked at from my subjective point of view, is not one play but many. The first act is realistic, delineating eight men who've chosen this life and making absurd comments on their reasons. The second act consists of three short scenes, at least the first two of which are partially irrelevant to the progress of the story. The play seems to be moving towards an episodic focus-from-the-lives-of-narrative. But in the final act the characters are blown up to the mythical, here and when proportions of my opening paragraph.

However, there is purpose in such methods. In retrospect, the second act which I found confusing was clearly intended to involve us with the characters by reflecting on their lives. Feelings and opinions in those stories were intrinsic parts, thus inspiring our sympathies and

blowing up the characters to epic proportions. It's a technique I'd question, for it all too successfully removes the intent of critical inquiry which any study of Australian men in this day and age ought to be encouraging. Needless to say, I loved the first act the most easily. It's grounded firmly in observable reality, and Powers knows that there are important reasons why these eight men are together at a remote part of the world — reasons which have nothing to do with big money or love of the outdoors life. When I worked in such places, my compatriots were pretty much semi-tough guys who stopped the shaggin' wedding, failed农夫s. The old Australian myth — the rugged richer and the poor go missing — is long dead. Nowdays the transients get richer and the poor return to them (and get a little up the nose) at stay-in towns and lose their jobs. The men in *Auckhouse* are not free, and the one setting throughout the play underscores the idea of the barracks as a cage: the last refuge of men in the rut from society and from themselves. There is no black man present, but otherwise Powers' eight workers are a representative sample of such men. We see them drinking, playing poker and cheating one another, and the hierarchy of power (mostly for power) is cleverly laid out before us. By the first interval we were chuckling steadily at their antics. It was, however, something of a surprise to me to see drama in the second and third acts and find that we were supposed to love them.

Joe MacCormac's production for the QTC succeeds in drawing strong characterisations from most of the actors, and it moves fluidly and confidently in the first and third acts. TV has made us all more critical of "stage" effects, and some coarse makeup and occasionally over-theatrical dramatises were flaws which will no longer be flaws when the production has to cope with the larger SGCO Theatre. No one seems to have solved that problem of effective lighting in a touring act in any Arts Council production I've ever seen, and that was no exception, with the margins of the stage very glossoy raised AGAIN, less variable stage conditions should rectify this.

The production seems to recognise the shift in style from reality to myth, and after a sparse, direct opening, the opening of the second act is linked by music which, as well as covering the time-lapse, gives a slightly ethereal atmosphere to the ensuing events. The effect was that of a piano accordion being played at a distance, and had both mythical and historical connotations. I'm not sure it was an altogether successful device — its introduction comes as a shock after the naturalness of the action — but certainly the shift in the play had successfully made the transition to this largish-thin-life conclusion, which was ridiculous only in retrospect.

Everyone, says Rattner in his film *The Rule of the Game*, has his reasons. The best of the recent Australian dramatic writings have been illustrations of this

point, whether it be greater, purtier legumes at Challey. But the weakness is more of even the best of that best has been the inability to represent a pluralistic social perspective to go beyond the confines of issues within the narrow circle of the principal characters to the larger conflict with the world in general. In *Auckhouse*, the minor characters of Mad Dog and Tasse, finally suggest other lives and other values, but they remain remote and unimportant to the play as a large. And so in the end Powers succeeds in creating character celebration and a well-made resolution, and what looked like being a consequence becomes up as a better-than-average *Corrie*-like-Spanner yarn. Two fairly clean overhelps, and (as seems to my blincs' memory) three times out of four.

A play that is "unspeakably morbid and sentimental by turns"

ABELARD AND HELÉNE BY JIN BACHELOR

Abelard and Helene by Ronald Major
Brinsford Arts Theatre, Brinsford, Oxford, 25 May 1972. Director, Ian Daneson; lighting design, Steven Brown; costume design, Jeff Hayes.
Peter Anderson, Ian Christie, Michael, Tom Pashford, Alan, Simon Handyside, David, Gerald, Robert Robinson, Phillip, Michael Schmidt, Peter de Mertreson, Steve Philip, Gilbert, Brian Brundage, Colin, G. Vinton, Jeff Hayes, Peter, Alan Beaumont, Julian, George Roberts, Alan, Robert Parker, Andrew of Agincourt, Robert, Tatting, Santa, Cedric, Dorothy Backwell, Alyce, Robert Parker, Andrew, Phillip, Peter, Robert of Cluny, Gis, Barbara, Bruce Corcoran, Paddington, Hugh, David Robinson, Scott, Alan, Stephen, Janet, Hastings, Euanne, Sue, Debbie Kerridge, Vicki Lewis, Andrew Poulter, Steven Blackman.

The impact on one critics the Brinsford Arts Theatre audience was a good one. On the stage, the setting was dark and forbidding — a series of angular slab walls jutting hard into the acting area with a raised vestibule at the back. On such a dark stage (the opening can be little more than 10 feet), the irregular spaces effectively suggested the essence of those lesser medieval clerical establishments which must have subduced the flesh every bit as successfully as the gothic cathedrals elevated the spirit.

The effect was properly spare and cold, and set-pieces (tables, chairs, a bed and the like) enhanced the perspective, functional lighting throughout.

Thus the lights went down, and a cluster of minor technical faults passed the opening, as they were to mar the performance from time to time thereafter. I learned later that there was one recalcitrant character causing a bluster of the lights, but this did not capture some ex-

ceedingly intense lighting bolts which cut across the mood on many occasions, but did a justly name observable switching of sound from speaker to speaker, or two simultaneous blares of music that swirled momentarily on the action (thus was not, I might add, an opening night).

All this took its toll on a show that requires a clearly established and well-tinted period atmosphere. The director, Ian Thomson, had gone a long way in this. It is interesting to remark, by the way, how many historical plays he has chosen to do in recent years; I especially like his handling of a "brooding" *charme* of rapists and men who howled in the background of almost every scene. They were as undeniably resonant as the influence of Mother Church must have been in the Middle Ages.

Two things, however, seemed at variance with the necessary gravity. One was the music. While dramatically appropriate, it was a rag-tag selection from different periods — even this century — and occasionally grandly orchestrated, so that it worked against the atmosphere of austerity. The same can be said of the voices, Rackett's blaré and lally-gang light which alternately flooded the eye.

The costumes, on the whole, were well-conceived and made (though there was a parish meeting when one character in monk-garb red and another in bright-blue were backed by the holly-green light). Generally, the year was set 1100. The monks and nuns sometimes looked more like refugees from a musical comedy chorus line than individuals.

In the end, it was the performances which did not measure up to the demands. The responsibility for this lies partly with the director and partly with the actors. They simply failed to realize the momentous and legendary passion of the two lovers, which should be archetypal and average. Nor did the surrounding characters do much than suggest the terrible sternity of the morally repressive society to which they still view.

For all this, Ian Gately, as Abel and, why conceived the final agonies of a great mind and spent grappling with the consequences of his religious obsession for Helene. Tim Pashford, as the 17-year-old boy, seemed rather too much one might have expected something fresh, warm, and pleasant. Jeff Hayes provided an ample and compassionate Collas de Vauvert — pity that a hirsute frog began a bit heavy with the make-up. One would have liked to see more of Dorothy Backwell. As Sister Goderic she had only one short scene, but in that brief span, she alone managed to give an sense of the past in the present.

As to the play, it is unspeakably morbid and sentimental by turns, and sometimes just plain silly. It is chronically episodic in construction, and the device of using a semi-starved rottweiler to bring Abelard to ratiocination in order to gain money to finance his own last, foods, unconvincing and crude — an example of the sick nature of the play. Hardly worthy of the careful attention it was given in that production. ■



Edgar Mitchell as Henry Carr, Helen Haugh as Cocty Carothers

**'A wonderful place
to take your wits
for a refreshing
evening walk'**

TRAVESTIES

CLIFF GILLAM

Directed by Tom Stoppard. Music by Will Turner. Lighting, Ross Australian Design.

18 May 1991 Director, John Wilson; designer, Graham Martin
Henry Carr, Edgar Mitchell; Tosca, Tessa Taitz; Robert van Mackelbergh, Jason Jevon, Neville Hindmarsh; Violin, Lynn Ulman; Goffit, John Joseph; Bass Ring, Christopher Carr; Judy Name, Cocty Carothers; Helen Haugh; Natascha Kingbridge; Maria Canning.

Pop, bang, pow, crackle, sizz, shush-hush, pshuk, pshuk, fizzle, thump, nosh, zoom, zing, tap-tap-tap, clack-clack, whiz-clap-clap-clap-clap. Excess. My poor storage at an exasperating wordprocessor of the exuberance of Tom Stoppard's *Travesties* at the His Majesty's.

Bull, but what else can one say? [The thump, by the way, is where the play falls dramatically into a caustic conclusion in the latter half, during a boring karaoke by Leon on the relation of Art to True Socialist Society — a subject on which Stoppard's Leon is as singularly unenlightening as was the historical original.]

In the May edition of this magazine, Bob Ellis reviewed the National's production of *Travesties*, and made some very judicious comments about the play you play. I find myself, after the Perth production, applauding heartily his assessment of the post-Stoppardian chapter pages for the antecedent comedy in, and full of, the once wonderful wags-and-sadies besides — which is perhaps only to be expected when James Joyce and the celebrated Papa of Deida, Tristan Tzara, are soft-shoe-shuffled through a charming parody of Wolfe's *The Importance of Being Algernon* (if it, sorry, isn't, you know, the other one).

In fact it's only *Wishful* [Lynn Ulman] who seems out of place in the Whistlers-Fantastics chosen line, striding valiantly across the pages of history-as-if-it-can-happen-while-Joyce, Tzara, Henry Carr — Henry Carr? well, yes, we're moving in here — Henry Carr et al. in high kicks and wide turns with verbal pyrotechnics and patter of a most singular lingo and come up with an entirely new theatrical cocktail! It is Stoppard, frothy on the top but packing a mind-crunching and explosive punch.

However, there has been enough well said by Bob Ellis about the play for me to be able to concentrate on the Perth production. At its centre (the eye of the tempest, the bottom of the whirlpool of words) is Edgar Mitchell, who plays both good as ever! the ageing Henry Carr, whose remarkable memories of golden wartime years in blissfully neutral Zurich are the matrix for the action of the play, and the young Henry Carr, more sprightly of flesh and amateur actor, a drollness and clarity with a taste for well-informed irony and an epigrammatic turn of phrase. Mitchell is superb both ways. He is the pleasant thing to a star-quality actor we have in Perth and I can think of no one who could have handled this demanding role with more aplomb. His excellent performance was complemented by that of Robert van Mackelbergh playing that giddy practitioner of random poetry, the guru of the "anti-up" crewster, Tristan Tzara. (I wonder, though, whether Mackelbergh's facility in French accents here led to typecasting — he's been doing his own end-of-the-worlds for three roles at successive gigs — from Napoleon to Blunder to Tzara.)

Gerald Hitchcock played a hypocritically mean Joyce given to bursts of amiable bitchiness and bouts of Odious meanness. He and McIndoeberg participated in one of the high points of the evening, a scene in which Joyce describes Tuan on the origins of Dada. The writing and delivery in this scene were faultless, but the same cannot be said of the ensemble work throughout the production. They play demands erogenous attack, and it is missed from the soaring pace of the opening (pop, bang pow, zap) that we were going to get it. But in the perfor-
mance given us, the pace faltered (bloop, bloop, blip), slowed (spatula, fizzle) to a dead stop (thump, stoned gravity, recovered mcl, boom, bang) in time for a neatly choreographed curtain call (pop-pap-
tapp) and well deserved applause (zap, whoosh, whoosh).

The minor roles were generally well-handled. Ivan King's hyperactive before "with raised eyebrows" was a delectable cameo. Helen Haugh and Judy Murray (a welcome return to Penthouse) played Cecily and Gertrudis, the "assistants" of Joyce and Joyce respectively, and both entwined

their parts with a fine sense of comic timing. As Louis and his wife, Geoff Echo and Morris Cawein, gave honest and creditable performances in one of the least satisfying roles.

Graham MacLennan's set, doubling as Henry Carr's elegant drawing room and a Dutch library, was located and generally effective, though I did find the elaborate business made of shifting furniture to the strains of Bert's *Divertissement* a little tedious, and wonder whether a simpler set might not have spared ("Oh dear") us from this.

The faltering in crispness and pace mentioned earlier, however, I think, is told to the account of director John Malouff, but rather to offenders of "setting in" that the actors must have early on in the run of such a demanding piece. I did feel, however, that there was an occasional lassitude in the ensemble, which perhaps stems to Malouff's undoubted need for staging choreographed costumes. Being allowed a bit more too much latitude. Taken all in all, the Hyde's *Divertissement* is a wonderful place to take your wife for a refreshing evening walk.

"One had the feeling that nobody has dared to break the glossy veneer of the play and rummage around in the innards"

OTHERWISE ENDED

MARYST LARKE

Otherwise Engaged by Simon Gray. Directed by Simon Gray. Cast: Dennis Miller, Alan Bennett, Anna French, Stephen Hough, Helen Cawein, Jeff Golding, Ian McKellen, Dorothy Saunders, Leslie Taylor, David Little, Ruth Carole Skinner.

Otherwise Engaged, long-awaited writer of critical accolades, turned out to be a disappointment.

The mechanics of *Burley* are here retold, instead of a central character inventing everybody within reach and thus triggering the action, we have a central character passive and pliant as a waterbed. He causes little ripples of reaction by means of come and quirky politeness in conversation, but mainly he is the butt of other people's anger, fears and frustrations. Because he is so blandly passive he creates an emotional vacuum which may be filled with the pernicious feelings of all who come in contact with

him. As a device it is initially disconcerting until we have moved on to the nuptials of the relationships that are gradually unravelled.

Simon, a publisher evidently successful, and at first glance even happily married. He has plotted a self-indulgent day of rest following on his new recording of *Porgy* (even switching the phone over to answering-service). He spends the entire run of the play being interrupted by a continual assortment of antagonists, and in their reactions to Simon that gradually reveal the figure of Simon for us. Even so, at the end we are still left with no engine, and have the choice of regarding him either as a switched-off figure from reality, or a smiling sage who manages to transcend the world of human foibles.

The part of Simon needs an actor who can suggest hidden strength, even some underlying anger that is released in one or two unexpected and untypically rowl gestures. Dennis Miller is not a happy choice for the part. His style of banter is one of sympathy with the general quirkiness of *Burley* — one is constantly aware of the stage putting his own style without having successfully measured the unfamiliar mode. The dialogue ought to be crisp and zip, half thrown away — *Coward* with its Oxford-educated — but here it is delivered fumbly, with expressive pauses at night, by T.S. Eliot.

There is throughout the production a feeling of being *clownish*, which extends to the music of Anna French's set. The hideously sheer-piece orange setting is straight out of the TV commercials for the workingman's super-burgers. No publisher would be seen dead in it, certainly not one who wants to *Porgy*. It's clearly aimed, as are the over-much books

decorating the shelves. Not a single period touch or relishing splash of colour adorns the scene. The same impersonal quality runs through the production, and one has the feeling that nobody has dared to break the glossy veneer of the play and ramshackle around on the innards. On the other hand, a mysterious hue is provided by the programme note outlining the story of *Porgy* and presumably encouraging us to consider position in the relationship between Simon and his actress friend Jeff to be underscored as that between the desolate Amelius and Porgy with his healing spirit? The eyes is targeted to bags, but it is food for thought.

The unlikable large-dwellers who attempt to batter down the stone wall of Simon's impermeability are above specimens selected from each field. There is Simon's friend Jeff, a boozey curmudgeon; wonderfully smirky about *Amenah*; Simon's schoolteacher brother Stephen, who is aggressively domineering and unrepentantly starts both small and large, and then's strong Mr Wood, a steady ex-scholarship and Dove, a triumphantly awful student of the new generation, set to impress a guest writer who comes to translate her charms from the Freud to Simon in order to get her book published to all this, as was the case in *Burley*, the figure of the estranged wife seems part of another, outer world, an abstraction and yet a resonance.

It is perhaps significant that the most convincing of the crew was Ian McKellen as the student. The international style of exhibition, bludging and studied accentuates contrast with effortless ease from one culture to another. With the older characters a specific Englishness is demanded that leaves the actors hanging between the twin dangers of parody and an English refined naturalism. The exception here is Leslie Wright in the really bizarre part of the ex-scholarship. However, having said his ushing stockbroker is a previous production one couldn't help wondering why he was not cast in the central part.

The woman seen in already disadvantaged Lord Taylor made a splendidly seductive Davies, who remained coolly plumborous regardless of whether her bosom were on show or elegantly covered, while Carole Skinner brought her usual intelligence and warmth to the part of the wife, though in some of the more hamfisted lines tended to sound hollow.

One is left in a quandary about the play. Were all these enthusiastic London critics seduced by a fine-sounding and the remarkable Alan Bates, or is it really a very good play dimmed here by lacklustre production? There were plenty of laughs, yes, but the attempt of the characters lacked electricity, and basically one felt only mildly interested in their problems. Has it come to us too late? Does the fact that we have seen both *The Department* and *A Windfall of Friends* about the local community throw the edge off it?

The only way to have at least a few of the questions answered is to go and see the play again later in the season.

"The Club"

John Watson (left) Frank Williamson, Jack

'Williamson is writing better than ever'

THE CLUB

GARRETT MCINTOSH

The Club by David Williamson. Melbourne Theatre Company, Box Office 7333. Matinee: October 24. Star: David Williamson. Set design: Simon Gurney. Tech: Frank Colletta. Gen: Comedy. Rating: Laurel. Duration: 1 hour. Dances: Russell Hopkins. Jack Frost. Writers: Geoff, John Williamson.

A brave man goes to the football and barflies gloriously in the middle of a pack of opposition supporters. A brave playwright writes a play about a club with a long, honourable and sensitive history and gets it staged in Melbourne. The football is Australian Rules, the writer is David Williamson, and *The Club* is perhaps the Collingwood Football Club, state at last.

Football appears, horrendously, as one of the more obvious components of a theatre audience, especially those clearly

involved with playing and administering the Victorian Football League clubs. If they were, the occasion would be ripe for more participation. The football stories that Williamson has used are fairly well known, and the characters on which he has based them are as well. The real people, and what happened to them are stored in legendry as you can get, but given the exaggeration of some of their deeds it's best not to name them.

However, the legends of the game that Williamson has chosen have gone way beyond mere truth, mere reality. They are the sorts of things well suited to the football historian, both here and overseas. Locally, one thinks of Hopgood's *And The Big Men Fly* and Oldsey's *A Salute to the Great Mc'Willy*, which used the metaphor of the boy from the bush who kicks bags of wheat 50 yards, and what happens to him in the complex city. There are other stories, of course, the sort of conversations in the pub about statistical facts, heroic deeds, tragic moments, poems written by the Great Playwright in the Sky. Improbable memories that cannot possibly work on the stage, perhaps because of their singular performance and in current remembrance they were on stage the walking-man's stage.

In the theatre, for an audience that Williamson has entertained across three in

the last seven years, and which he knows better than any other person writing on Australian football, that is a good place to hang his traditional concern for the way relationships work inside institutions, whether they be a party, a college, a marriage or a tribe. As he knows quite well, the changes and mutations and subject matter are quite dissimilar in any of those movements.

So *The Club*, while it is similar to the Collingwood Club, with lots of Richmond, North Melbourne and Carlton thrown in, and while the characters are recognisable to the cognoscenti, is not a play about football. It is not David Stanby's *The Changing Room* translated in the Antipodes. This is a disappointment to the fans, who will miss the real tragedy and drama of the game. That kind of play is yet to be written, and it does mean that *The Club* will be able to play for long seasons in places where the Australian Rules game is like the Black Death.

The narrative is concerned with the search of a club who has had little success in the past few years — go to the finals, but couldn't go on with it, lost the past five games. Lauro, the coach, has landed on his recognition over a fist fight with the president. The president, of the return type, seems to be interfering with the team selection and expelling anyone no

out Louis. There are other workers in the group. Gerry, the well-paid administrator is all things to all men, and has a plan which does little justice to many of the people currently ousted. Thawen Aouf, who has played the most guitar, was a fanatical member of a cult, and while going on in years, still speaks his bits into everything. He has a few schemes going too. What really goes on the coach's goat, though, was the buying of a \$90,000 racing horse. Tassanai. Coach thinks he could have done better business, although the tool has lots of talent, but is not trying. The other players resent him. He's stoned half the time. He spends his game-watching money in while the ball passes him by. And there's the captain, who is kicking the coach, threatening a strike.

Lots of complications. Everyone is scheming. It's a bit like *The Revenant's* Trilogy, except that the coach, the manager and the captain finally get their act together to try to beat the mechanisms of the others by putting the chain off the bottom of the ladder.

What it's really about though, is a small bourgeoisie and how it works: the shifting fortunes, lies, statements, hypocrisies, acts of principle, instant backslidings, all mixed together most craftily in the human play. Williamson has written for some time. Nobody is what they seem.

The McManus Theatre Company production, directed by Rodger Fisher with Frank Gellatly as the president, Gerald Maguire as the administrator, Terence Donavan as the coach, Harold Hopkins as the captain, Pratik Wilton as the old player, and John Walton as the recruit is a bit under-rehearsed and slow but the boat fits it.

One didn't get the fact of a football club mostly male, and perhaps the casting might have been more physically true to type but the night was as enjoyable a night as I've had at Russell Street in some time. I think the public will like the play, too. The Club touches enough areas of concern for the Williamson audience, and is funny enough to run. Good luck to them! He's got his territory clearly mapped out and he's writing better than ever.

"Real words from real people, convincingly performed"

INTERVIEW: NICKIE

GAKRIEL HU THOMPSON

Terminator's *Never* by Terence Williamson, and the *Joint Stock* *Theatre Group*, Australian Performing Group, Paul Patten, Carlton, Victoria. Opened 20 April 1977. Director, Wilfred Last. Music, James Gray. Production, Michaela, Richard Vaughan, Ltd., Cast Peter, Robbie,



Peter Robins - *Terminator's* *Never* (above). Terry Paul Thompson, Paul Phil Williamson

Living Hellhouse

Mercenary is one of the more provocative words that can be applied to a person or deed. To be mercenary is not only to be interested in money, but to dominate merely for money. The implication is that one has to do anything for money, however grabby. Doing something for money against one's will on the other hand, is not necessary. Like working. Working for money is certainly mercenary, and in itself can be merciful as well. Mercenaries, however, often used in the defense of one's country, say, are not well liked. There is the idea that a country is only worth defending if you do it yourself.

Going to fight for a country, however, if you agree with it, is not necessarily mercenary. The Spanish Civil War, for instance. Going off there was an act of bravery, whereas the *Cold War* was just the kind of it if payment came out of mercenaries, in general, fight for causes they don't agree with. People who fight for causes they do agree with may get paid, but they fight for other motives. Anglia, for instance. Many fought, but few were called mercenaries. *Cubans*, for instance.

Those who were recruited from England at mercenaries for Anglia have been treated as scum. The red Colonel Lillian has joined the growing pantheon of 20th century masters.

But what of the men themselves? Are they "professionals", grasp more armed forces, what? Where do they come from? Nationalism? Their country? Who were their family? What do their acts mean to the rest of the world? The *Joint Stock* play, *Terminator's* *Never*, as performed by the APG, is about all those things, and more — you're so simply concerned and performed that it's like having a conversation (or monologue) with one in a pub.

Seven people are seated in a row in front of an audience. They, with one pair of exceptions, do not talk to each other. They speak to an. There's a stockbroker, who is obsessed in a merely "practical" way with the "implications" of Angola, no economic weight. There's the English end of the recruitment process, a professional who knows everything about weapons, fighting, survival. There's a couple of British army graduates, from Northern Ireland, who as boy soldiers, are quite up to making the big, brutal. There's a woman journalist, covering the human-interest angle of a starting mercenary and family. There's the girlfriend of a recruit and his, and his background. There's a young kid, naive, silly. They tell in their stories.

The seven of them take it in turns to talk, to explain themselves. What they say is an edited transcript of what they did say to Dorothy Sayers, and the Joint Stock Company, a England. Real words from real people, convincingly performed.

In the end, the performance is about what life is like for these people, people like them. The most violent images are not those of killing, but of the soldier's loss for his weapons, where the professional describes what he knows about arms trafficking. The journalist, during her professional flag, by going after a story, it has the power of direct speech, of the truth as they see it. I don't think you get any closer to the truth of their motivation, the psychology of the mercenary, how could you when these people are presented as not unhappy with their lot, as caretakers of some experience?

Terminator's *Never*, is as brilliant and simplicity, in one of the best things the APG has done for quite a while. It is soundly directed by Wilfred Last, and ably performed.

The artist as victim of society

THE INTERVIEW
THE GREAT OSCAR WILDE TRIAL

SUSANNE SPUNNER

Two Plays by Barry Dickson. In: *Memo Theatre*. Carlton: Nicolas Opalin. Pp. May 1977.

The Author: Director, Lew Eaton
Interviewer: Howard Stanley. Barry Dickson,
Barry MacLeod.
The Great Oscar Wilde Trial Director: Peter
Green
Oscar Wilde, Ross Douth, Prosecutor Attorney,
Max Hassard.

Melbourne writer and actor Barry Dickson has written two short plays which could be subtitled "A Parable of The Artist Persecuted by Society".

In *The Interview* a straight three-pace, one man interview — a nearly grown-old cell-phone-on — "square artist", Barry Dickson — is, well, the author. The interviewer (Howard Stanley) is seated deferentially behind a vast executive desk littered with the paraphernalia, of a busy man, while the interviewee (Barry) idly idly commands a lonely chair and the yawning alcove at West of the desk. On the wall behind the interview there is a large Australian flag and a pageantress circa of over leider Malcolm Fraser.

From his first appearance, Howard Stanley is a study in perpetual motion of

the neurotic organisation man, a sort of Woody-Alles granola who mainly shuffles papers, lights cigarettes, pops pills, and kicks frantically through his papers. When he finally arrives the interviewer, he launches into a diatribe on the tone of such prima donnas as artist judges as Mr. Dickson, or was it Mr. Prokofiev? Through this blustering attack on his artistic credibility Mr. Dickson/Prokofiev et al remain unscathed and unrepenting.

The interview's mounting frenzy is punctuated by a succession of puffed, amplified phone-calls from Head Office threatening him with punishment to the firm's branch in Balmain. Eventually, though for no apparent reason save want of amanuensis, the interviewee falls dramatically from his chair and dies. With the characteristic indifference of society to the artist, the event passes almost unheeded by the interviewer; however, soon after, he too takes his leave and shoots himself, perhaps inadvertently making that with Mr. Dickson's demise, light had gone out in the world.

The tightly enclosed hermetic world of *The Interview* is reminiscent of Rosencratz & The Lazarus, but the strength of *The Crosses* is the counterpoint provided by the play against which we can measure the salient cruelty of the teacher. In *The Interview* there is no such balance, since the interviewer (Barry Dickson), never speaks except under the "real" Barry Dickson, wrote the play. A clever conceit, but one that finally subdues the play, since the ar-

tist never shows his cards, nor brings the problematic interviewee into his life. The director, Lew Eaton, set the play up originally as a jazz concert. The interviewer was crazed and the artist so passive from the beginning that there was very little room for movement.

The Great Oscar Wilde Trial was more suspenseful and original, less all-consumed and violent, so easier gently. The basic parameters of the play were the trifling trial which Wilde endured in 1895 and which sent him to prison for two years with hard labour for homosexual practices. The dialogue formality of an Old Bailey trial becomes the engine for a lively and witty interaction into the shared process of defining dramatic social behaviour.

The glibness of the law at Wildest first by the lined-mauled butler is contrasted with a young bandicoot. The range of reveal questions considered includes, kindness to animals, and the writing qualities of bandicoots over porcupines. Homosexuality is never mentioned, so the tragedy of Wilde's treatment is inverted and we are reminded in a William Beaufort wold pondering whether, if Jack is Lazarus in the country, is he a bandicoot-down, in the city?

Under Peter Green's direction, both the only presenting council (Max Hassard) and Wilde (Ross Douth) give precise and convincing performances that are sensitively poised and elegantly articulated. The play is a delightful trinket in words by barister and poet.

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'Provocative plays by playwrights not ready to accept the old ways as the only ways'

**I SAW WITH MY LOVE
THE CRIPPLE PLAY
HE TURNS
GLITTER**

BRIELE MCKENDREY

I Saw with My Love by Northern Fly; Adelaide Theatre Group; Marion Theatre, Adelaide. Opened May 1977. Director, Helen Cunningham. Design, Greg and Sue Rogers Stage manager, June Henderson. Stage and Set Paint, Michael Lister. Sets, Pat Kelly. Hair, Margaret Evans. Judge Sue Purcell, Secretary.

Mark Lawrence, Region, Fisher Commercial Traveller, Pauline Lethbridge and Cecilia Tamm. *The Cripple Play* by Max Richards, Adelaide Theatre Group; Marion Theatre, Adelaide. Opened May 1977. Director, Helen Cunningham. Cripple, Ian Chisholm.

Waiting in Vain by Veronika Stepanov, Adelaide Festival Centre Trustee and Associate of Community Theatre, The Space, Adelaide. Opened 3 June 1977. Director, Veronika Stepanov, lighting designer, Ian Linton. AD, Julian Bond Manager, Romeo Blakely. Set design.

Given by Peter Murphy, AFCT and ACT. The Space, Adelaide. Opened 3 June 1977. Director, Veronika Stepanov, set design, Robert Brown, costume design, Jonathan Smillett, lighting design, Ian Linton.

Cast list: Michael O'neill, Sue Daugler, Queen, Beverley Cowan, Blue King, Ian Morland, Blue Queen, Janice Balmer, Ho, Gare Angel, Sto, Veronika Stepanov, Jester, Michael Brown, Joint Queen, Duncan Jay, First Frost, Cleve Landstrum, Second Frost, Robyn Murphy, Third Frost, Mark Mongeridge, Ruler, Pam Richardson, Rod Gould, Zippy, Ross, Roberta Bender, Blue Queen, Diane Golding, John York, Queen, Rod Page, Helen Macmillan, Blue Page, Dennis Stephens.

Four plays by two all-Adelaide men prolific theatre groups: South Australian Creative Workshops performing *Masquerade* and *Glow* at the Festival Centre's underground space and the Adelaide Theatre Group presenting *The Cripple Play* and *I Saw with My Love* at the Berlin Theatre, a converted house in the park. Though the geography was different each play found its space. Both evenings provided the audience with a lot of the goods, they were provoked to think a little, see a lot and hear what they chose to pick up.

One is reminded, at seeing the plays, at the differences of approach and are open to the playwright from nothing a situation can be made, if there is no situation.

What does it become? Ah she? An abstraction? It was interesting to watch the audience, there were those who for moments were suspended in a sort of empathy and others who were worried by what was being told to them. Asked to wade through abstractions unfamiliar, open your mind that just didn't come together, and take to figure just non-existing, the

playgoer has to be committed to survival.

A play that asks questions by answering truths, Barbara Eve's *I Sat with my Lover* has women playing men and men playing women. Geographically we are shown the situation of role-playing. The model wife is raped, the husband is advancing in typically ambitious, the story unfolds in short scenes, film, silent documentary at times. An effective atmosphere-making piece of theatre, it strength lies in paradox. Directed by Helen Cunningham, with a strong cast styled to an appropriate level, *I Sat with my Lover* now moves towards her other roles. With the sexlessness comes a certain distance from the norm and when presented with a supposedly usual situation, for example the wife's attempt at guessing herself, it may always be short of believability and somewhat naive. A graphic example: Barbara Eve's use of the stage and a good ensemble of actors is a credit to her. Though you don't have to agree with the proportion of the problem, certainly men and women need a few more eye-to-eye.

The first half of Max Cunningham's package in *The Crappie Play* by Max Richards. Written some years ago, this farce performed by G. Chatterton in a controlled and winning manner, the play takes you into the very small world of a 50-year-old woman crippled in youth and bound to a wheelchair. In pursuit her resilience in aches let gentleness, the gets angry with people refuses to go on a couple's outing, reveals her love life, the shrinks like mad in manner and sharp she plays games with herself and the audience, as well as tricks on the wheelchair. There are moments during her presentation when you wonder how far it goes, she's an actress, all her words and events are known. Who's the cripple?

Over at the Space, the Association of Community Theatres has made possible a season of plays, the first of which are *Blowing in the Wind* by Veronique Swanson, and *Gitter* by Peter Murphy.

Managing a play without a set, only light. It opens with a bang to reveal someone looking dead on stage who calls a halt to the action to apply bandages blood in the appropriate area. In this play of an idea, an illustration of a plot within a plot, an actor will call for aid from the director sitting in the audience, the stage entered in near a farce. The comic, played by Julia Stakes and David Flanagan, are out the hunter and the hunted. He shoots her by mistake — in fact, he meant to bring down his great symbol, the deer. Another play of rags, of not-certain possibilities. At one point, as she's dying, the lights fade slowly. Julia Stakes never looked so good. Tight direction by Maria Christensen made a difficult concept easier to accept.

The other play of the season, by Melbourne playwright Peter Murphy, was *Gitter*. Using 20 members of South Australian Creative Workshops, Maria Christensen stages a piece of ritual theatre. Performed on a set that was too much an

afterthought to the play's conception, the action depicts violence and the violent hate of many people. More the exasperation in language too big to suit the circumstance, forced by others and characterised by desecration. Often it seemed that the dialogue did not suggest the physicality.

burning up a fleet of prosecutive plays by playwrights not ready to accept the old ways in the only way.

Much more than just a good show by Ruth Cracknell

JUST RUTH

PETER WARD

Just Ruth by Ruth Cracknell, Alexander Box, David Williamson, South Australian Theatre Company, Playhouse Studio, Circular Quay, 5 May 1977. Director: Colin George; designer: Rodney Ford; lighting design: Nigel Lomax; drama: Michael Falzon; stage: director: Peter Williamson; stage manager: Gabrielle Bridges; Stage Shift: Cracknell, Sybil Graham, Michael Falzon.

Just Ruth wins just Ruth Cracknell, on-stage or elsewhere, doing that most personally devastating thing for a performance: one-person show. She was an astoundingly alone in this venture, however. To one side was Sybil Graham, at the piano, giving a kind of on-stage piano-bar performance, and generally round about was Michael Falzon the actor, who played fast, sensuously and an essential extra. Then there was Rodney Ford's set, a central platform, a proscenium decorated with big sheet-bar paper roses, and all surrounded by an intricate network of red construction forming an 'o', and, framing Ruth, plus the lighting plot, the prop, and the music. But after all was said, sung, carried, lit up and done, there was just Ruth.

She made a slightly hesitant start — it was a trial of testing the air for the audience's mood — before she took its collective hand and led a through one of the happiest nights at the theatre. It has been, at least this member's pleasure to have for years.

I was, in fact, a little surprised — back to the days, 20 odd years ago, when she was performing in Sydney's Phillip Street Theatre. The single-person sketch, the monologue, Sybil Graham indeed at the piano, and that sense of tension, off-beat, whimsy and comment, that made review at times the stuff of theatrical art, and nearly always in that theatre at least, a very good show.

And *Just Ruth*, at Adelaide's Playhouse was more than just a good show. First, as a vehicle for Ruth Cracknell's considerable review talents, it was ideal. She is a personality actor, a character on her own right, a social, a style, a tragicomic drama, a delicious angularity, and sarcasm with a sense of the high-camp of it all. Simply, at that level, given the right material, some-

thing good was bound to happen.

But then someone had the good sense — it was probably director Colin George — to go one step further. The first step was the original choice of Sybil Graham as the musical accompanist, whom when a high schooler I heard sing "name" written to write pieces for the then Michael Cox, Peter Williamson, David Williamson, and Alex Hugo. Michael Cox's and Peter Williamson's pieces for some unexplained reason did not make it, but David Williamson was there with new poems, *My Sweet Days Down the Lane and Early with the Mystery Eyes*, while Alexander Box contributed *Foolish Mountain Clock One*. The third writer-developer was Ruth Cracknell herself. She contributed three pieces and thus unwittingly and interestingly covered material ranging in, and the lightness of touch in, tragicomic some of the could respond.

In terms of the writing, then, it was David Williamson's piece *Lady With the Mystery Eyes* that brought the production to the edge of the farcic, probing the perimeter of pathos lightly and placently, not sufficiently strongly to break the mood, but enough to give dimension and substance to the piece itself, and thus the production as a whole.

The piece is a monologue in which a woman begins to explain to her doctor that she has a major ailment and ends by confessing that she has murdered her husband. It is an extremely measured piece of writing of such psychological intricacy that it left the audience dramatically bemused, and left me practising and re-reading psychiatrist to see if it would be possible for the performance to be mind-tapped for me to do.

So much for the drama of the night, achieved as it was with taste and discernance. For the rest, the fare was more safely part of the ordinary traditions of popular review, performed and illuminated by the lenses that have been learned in serious and light theatre over the past 25 to 30 years.

The night opened with one of the old set-pieces, a tawdry of course, giving her hand caught in a net. There follows a more poignant piece, *Foolish Nights*, in which the lower-middle-class, misinformed, prejudiced and racist Englishigrant is subjected to one of the most viciously telling pieces of Poetry-bashing that I think the Australian stage has seen. And about here, too, Englishigrants are as much fair game in this area as ever are cannibals.

The first half finished with one of the most brilliant pieces in the production, *Show Colchester Syria*, a decorated by an enormous picture-hat, and she in the epitome of all the ladies you have ever seen in a South Yarra or Rose Bay luncheon restaurant. I think the sketch was an old Phillip Street one, and it was uprehearsed, as the lady jolts from one absurd culinary error to the next.

Other memorable moments in the first were Williamson's *Miss Hertzel*, the

archetypal sports mistress addressing a parents' meeting, an ancient crane tight-rope-walking in *Azot Colour*, the oldest and most cynical Queenie in Australia is the bus tour, *Wanda*, exploring all about the 70s you didn't need to know, and then there's Vicki Madison, a 30-something journalist, who, in an absurdly good and such reporting an assassination she finds she has committed herself! It was not so successful as it could perhaps have been, or at least, I would say. Mr Colin Gilligan has definitely enhanced a critic for using. But I'd say he would prefer it as far as that of the alternative treatment.

That possibly irrelevant aside aside, there are three other things that seem to me to be worth saying about this enjoyable production. Firstly and simply, what a pity it is that it comes travel. Secondly, as a general question, in Australia readers can wonder why the art of professional review, with its delicate blend of humour, satire and serious comment, has declined, at least in the English-speaking world. Is it, as Colm Tóibín suggests, that abroad theatre, in a sense, looks in place? It didn't in Europe, traditions of review are still healthy and politically active on both sides of the Channel.

And thirdly, how much better could it have been had the audience here maintained here and the techniques in writing and performance been than further honed up and refined. It would have meant, for instance, that the delightful, generously bushy, and entirely amateur character who is Sybil Oberholz wouldn't have had to spend her life peeling out American tulips, but rather would have had some more relevant stuff to point out here at home, whether the Poets thought it irrelevant or not.

before an audience? Can we respond to the tale of Joe Keller, who allowed faulty cylinder heads to be shipped out of his factory to the Air Force, and then manoeuvred his partner into taking the blame when the planes crashed? The play itself is unapologetic from the world of the 1940s, with its antipathy of their government's disengagement, that coming from post-war stability, the alienation from family and society experienced by the soldier-from-the-war returning, whose restlessness and search for meaning now seems — in the wake of numerous popular and literary treatments of the same theme — perhaps slightly clichéd. What is there in Miller's dramatic working-out of his beloved theme of personal and public responsibility that will prompt the director and audience to respond? Therein, structure and characterization make no attempt to conceal their total dependence on them, nor what it's the work-out of the rules of sub-literature postulate, and how should a director tackle these questions?

Problems, problems and nowhere an answer in David Williamson's production of, rather, not the original one would expect from a thought-through view of the play. The direction carries weightless, and it cannot positively sloppy. There is some quite dangerous muddling in the second act which nobody seemed interested in correcting. Yet Williamson must have had some purpose in choosing the play, unless the audience was no success getting more than an impression akin to the sum of admissions and collections one has at the sight and sound of a smooth-running vintage Rolls-Royce, or at the colour and noise of a glass of vintage port. Yet, of course, audiences tend to be satisfied at, but hardly compelled.

Yet, given the lack of thrust in the production, given the lack of any sense of a director striking the strengths and weaknesses of the text, there is much confidence in the performances. Patricia Kennedy, in particular, is outstanding as Kate Keller from the moment she comes on, the atmosphere intense; the relationship started to come into form, the world of the Kellers began to seem both real and relieved. Even when Miller's lines are at their most mockish — in the final reading addressed to Chris "Don't close your eyes on yourself. Forget now. Live" — she gives them poise, meaning, weight. Although the character, because of Miller's writing, becomes less interesting as the play progresses, she held the attention throughout. Yet never was there the feeling that she was overplaying, hogging the centre stage, pushing the other characters to the edges of the drama. Equally the best performance I've seen from an Australian actress, and we can only hope that Adrienne will get more opportunities to do her — soon.

But if her performance was the most notable, she was well supported by the other members of the Keller family: Maxine Jones (of whom I have in the past been slightly critical) was far happier and much more persuasive as Joe, the middle-aged

businessman who can justify the larger amounts in terms of personal honour for the family unit. It was a characteristic in a similar way to his recent appearance in a *Mozartiana* episode, and as the evidence of birth, he is better suited to such roles than either Chisholm or Shandor. At a time when affability was of the greatest, easy variety rather than that false gaudiness which is the businessman's stock-in-trade, he nevertheless made for a convincing, and in the final moments, moving figure. And in the scene when he confronts George, the lawyer son of the man he has married, and now, the young man's innocence back in his face while doing a hatched job on his former partner, he has precisely the right mix of concern and single-minded self-satisfaction. With just a little more attention, this quality, so crucial to Miller's view of Joe, could have been obliquely suggested throughout the performance.

Although Kate Taylor, as the returned soldier who finally manages to ask the question "What-did-you-do-during-the-war Daddy?", was occasionally laudable and uncertain, there was still much to commend in her approach to a character whose knight-in-shining-armour posturing might have become tiresome and unconvincing. Her effectively convey the paradox and uncertainty in his approaches to Ann, and the scenes with Ann moved well from guarded affection to more and rapidly-reinforced knowledge. Excellent support also from the admirable Edwin Hodgeman as Jim Raylin, giving a beautiful demonstration of how to interact without becoming fidgety or uninteresting, and from a very well-controlled Stephen Gately as his wife. Displaying a good understanding of how to deliver his stage lines without telegraphing them, she made the character a great deal further, more interesting and more credible than she appears on the page.

Dorothy Verrall was modest and comfortable as Ann, and Craig Ashby seemed to think that Miller's stage direction "moving" of George Beckett meant that he should pivot around the stage like a perpetually-oscillating cone of hyper-activity. He was the now-familiar grumpy man, looking like an emphysematic, nightmarish vision of a lumberjack, affected an unconvincing halcyon. Throwing aside shatters, a symbolic act that resembled nothing so much as a splattered water-park surrounded by a craggy mess, the whole framed by curved, encircling paws. The effect was like viewing the stage through a fish eye lens, probably significant for those who don't suffer from vertigo or dizziness, and totally, transparently superficial.

The strength of this *All My Sons* is in the performances, and perhaps — to provide a partial answer to the opening question — this is what the play still has to offer the right of access working hard and, for the most part, to good effect, with lines and characters who are still sufficiently well-crafted and well-counselled to strike several chords even in those who have become suspicious of the well-made play.

Much to admire, but lack of thrust in David Williamson's production

AT THE SOON

MICHAEL MORLEY

© 1991 Mr. Sony by Arthur Miller. South Australian Theatre Company, Playhouse Theatre, Festival Centre, Adelaide. Opens 25 May 1991. Director, David Williamson; designer, John Corcoran; lighting design, Nigel Lavers; stage manager, Peter Wilson; stage manager, Peter Rankin.
Mr. Keller: Bruce James; Mrs. Keller: Patricia Kennedy; Chris Keller: Ben Hunter; Ann Beckett: Dorothy Vernon; George Beckett: Craig Ashby; Dr Jim Beckett: Edwin Hodgeman; Sam Haskins: Douglas Clegg; Anna: Lucy Lockett Baynes; Lydia: Robell Russell.

What should an Australian production of *All My Sons* in the 1990s seek to set

What do you do when your theatre blows away? Richard Creswick reports

DARWIN STAGES A REVIVAL

Australian theatre is alive and well in Darwin, although not without its difficulties. The two major theatrical groups in Darwin before the cyclone still exist and have been active since the disaster, but both face problems with their theatres.

Carewagh Theatre Incorporated suffered worst at the hands of Tracy because its old, fire-fight-satisfactory corrugated building was all but demolished, left with a set of heartboards and the partly clad steel frame of its proscenium-style stage, the company bravely limped back to present the first post-cyclone live theatre performance — *Richard III* and *Doctor in Love*, in what it billed as an "Open-air" performance.

The dry season weather of May 1979 and the shortage of entertainment in the still devastated city ensured the success of the production. However, mounting problems associated with lighting, audience safety and theatre security soon put paid to hopes of staging further productions.

Theatre security was, in fact, a major problem even during the run of *Bombay Dove* because a largely unwatched access to the front of the stage was off that "locked" the theatre and it proved no deterrent to vandals who, at least one occasion, entered the theatre and damaged the set with axes. When curtains, designed for hoisting, moved into the theatre's shell and the "wo" descended, the Carewagh Group switched to theatre restaurants and staged a very successful run of Jack Hibberd's *Death Bands*.

Although the group's earlier performances of *Bombay Dove* were marred by poor curtain arrangements and perhaps inadequate attention to the music, it became eventually a polished and well-rehearsed production that brought an entirely new type of theatre to Darwin. The combination of theatre with delicious food and drink seemed ideal for Darwin, where people are not among the most enthusiastic of theatre-goers even at the best of times. In fact, so good was the public response that the group staged an extended season of private shows at such places as the Darwin Hospital and the Navy Base. It also played to enthusiastic audiences in a three-performance season at Nhulunbuy, the mining town on the Gove Peninsula. That success prompted the Carewagh Group to present the follow-up Hibberd play, *Goodbye Joe*, which, despite some strong acting, was less successful than *Bombay Dove*. Now the Carewagh Theatre Group is considering doing *Sister Act* of the Seven-year-old Dali, which is undergoing a revival of interest.

The group is also exploring avenues of getting a new theatre built, but, as yet, is not enough prospect given the group's limited resources, the present economic climate and the present Federal Government's ambiguous attitude to the cyclone.

The story for Darwin's other amateur group, the Darwin Theatre Group, has been one of better fortune, although still somewhat problematical.

DTG operates out of a store building, Brown's Mart, which, as the name implies, is a former shopping emporium, and has also been used as a police station. Brown's Mart is administered by a board of trustees and is a rare historical building by the National Trust.

Although unscathed by the cyclone, it remained structurally sound and there were rapid and effective moves to have it rebuilt. While the work of rebuilding and strengthening the Mart to cyclone-proof standards was going on, the Theatre Group passed through a relatively quiet time, mostly by concentrating on street theatre and outdoor performances, including an interesting gardens version of *Marietta Night*.

Simon Hargreaves was brought to Darwin late in 1979 to write (with the help of local actors) and then produce, a play which, not surprisingly, turned out to be loosely based on the harrowing bombing and red tape that surrounded the early stages of Darwin's post-cyclone reconstruction. The play was called *Corporation* and was performed in emblematic settings of the open-air amphitheatre of the YMCA in Darwin Harbour and the DTG's own set up in Brown's Mart. The DTG scored a hit with *Corporation* because so many Darwin people knew the frustrations of the named character in the play.

The re-opening of Brown's Mart last year led to a series of live theatre, with DTG staging a review — again loosely based on post-cyclone events — then a production of John Peter's *Cast of the Amazons*, which drew wide critical acclaim for the cast and the producer, Darren Hartman and Tim Frost.

And it was then that DTG met more problems. The cost of re-roofing the Mart and insulating the air-conditioning that's almost obligatory for Darwin, left the trustees without enough money to provide proper seating. Fire-control officers, pricing the need for head room and other safety factors, refused approval for a licence for live performances. A fund-raising group calling itself Friends of Brown's Mart was formed and a new well on the way to raising the \$15,000 needed to bring the building up to scratch. But, until the work is done, Brown's Mart is out,

However, what could have been a major setback for amateur theatre in Darwin became a triumph with the opening of the new Christ Church Cathedral, also built to replace a historic building destroyed by the cyclone.

The original Christ Church Cathedral was a small stone church and its destruction resulted in an Australian-wide fund-raising campaign for the construction of a spectacular new, glass-and-steel structure. The new cathedral, rising stark but inspiring from the site of the original building, was consecrated on March in the presence of the Archbishop of Canterbury Dr Donald Coggan. As part of the consecration ceremonies, the Anglican Church asked the Darwin Theatre Group to present a production in the cathedral. A week earlier, the result was the group's final and most ambitious production, *Robert Bolt's A Man for all Seasons*.

Finding experienced actors to fill the often male roles was not easy, but, to his credit, producer Ted Whistler put together one of the best-produced plays performed by amateurs in Darwin.

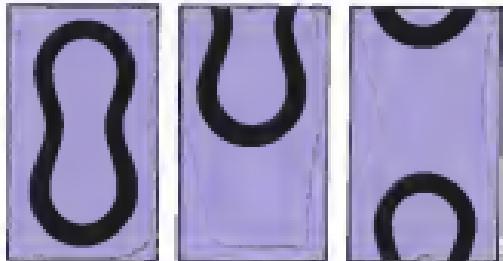
A series of many on-stage appearances for DTG Whistler is relatively new to production but he brought to the project boundless energy and enthusiasm, as well as an unshakable belief in the importance of his own dreams.

Self-confidence inevitably creates some initial production conflicts and it happened with *A Man for all Seasons*, leading eventually to the resignation of the set designer and the play's production manager.

There were other problems too. Because the cathedral was still in the elimination stage when rehearsals began, the set had to be constructed in Brown's Mart and moved to the cathedral later. In fact, the move took place only two days before the production began and the final dress rehearsal was delayed and after that by other activities associated with the cathedral's consecration and opening. Despite this, the play was presented to capacity audiences in a straight-gabled setting.

Such problems haven't been uncommon in Darwin's amateur theatre world in the two years since Cyclone Tracy, but the fact that *A Man for all Seasons* was presented on time and with a minimum of problems is confirmation in a good sign for live theatre in Darwin.

Richard Creswick is an ABC journalist in Darwin, where he has lived for just over six years. Since coming to Darwin he has been a member of both the Carewagh Theatre Group and the Darwin Theatre Group. He has acted in plays for both groups, most recently in *Cast of the Amazons*.



THE PEANUTS PROBLEM

Can the Elizabethan Theatre Trust hit that elusive jackpot?



The headquarters of the Elizabethan Theatre Trust, in Darling Street, Sydney, has the feel of a place veering down in the world. The stock bays are empty, and in the boardroom, looking north across Windmill Street to the harbour, the decorations are reduced to a branch of red in a Solomopea bottle.

Jarry Jarryton-Smith, the trust's general manager, is an exception to the expression of frugal cheerfulness about the place. He's as spry as anyone can remember. It was he, the trust's head of theatrical promotions, Bill Kaval, and his publicity man, John Lutze, who asked Theatre Australia to talk about the strategies of criticism that followed the (unpublished) Cooper and Lyndhurst report and the Paul O'Toole sacking. The trust wanted an opportunity to present its case side by side with ours.

Robert Page and I represented Theatre Australia. We were disappointed by unexplained stipulations from Jarryton-Smith that he would not discuss staff policy that was for the board, he said; and that he would in general, be willing to be quoted only on the trust's entrepreneurial role. It was a blow softened by a promise that emerged later in the afternoon that *Theatre Australia* will be given an interview when the Cooper and Lyndhurst management consultants' report is settled, and all the issues can be discussed and all questions about the trust answered.

But in any case, the entrepreneurial activities of the trust require immediate examination. The central recommendation

of the Cooper report is that functions of the trust be passed, leaving it with only a national entrepreneurial role, foreign tours and intimate tours. An examination of their trust's skills in that field is a first priority.

"It is not a showstopper anywhere in the world — it doesn't get us where — it's just getting us there to the Australian public, if the quality is there," said Jarryton-Smith. "And we endeavour to present Australian companies as widely as possible within the funds available, provided the quality is there."

But the trust has only peanuts to play with: in 1975 it allocated itself an entrepreneurial fund of \$640 000. In fact in 1976 this was cut to \$321 000. It can earn more than half the general manager's salary instead of allocating resources for the job the trust made the decision to run them, and in pursuit of goals in the last 11

months, it increased in three Elstey shows, one illustrated show, and the shows imported through the Sydney Theatre Royal — starting with Dead End Girls (Peter O'Toole) and continuing with *The Trap* of L.S. Stokely Haynes, *The Phoenix of the Company*, (Douglas Fairbanks Jr.) and *Under the Volcano*.

To suggest that the shows at the Theatre Royal were post-quality goods, that they're damaged Australian light entertainments and that they're failed to make much money, the trust replies in much the way Bill Kaval did that afternoon. There is the box-office potential — the potential is there to raise \$100 000, \$40 000, \$20 000. "The trust seems to have been banking on a jackpot."

Mary Dowd, the trust's belief it's free to raise its money any way it can². Jarryton-Smith: Yes, I think so. Subject to any qualifications we would like to make ourselves in the way we don't. I wouldn't suggest it could increase in a year-round. But, provided it's within the general parameters of the artistic world, it is.

Mary Dowd: Does the trust feel free to never, ever though the activities it becomes associated with are working contrary to what appear to be its own objectives?

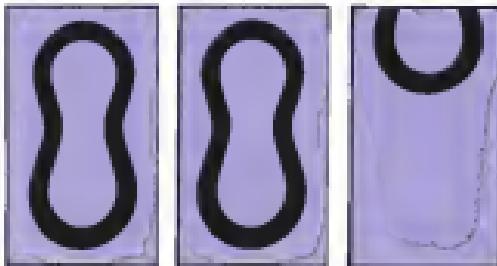
Jarryton-Smith: I would think the trust staff would have to determine whether it is going to be working contrary to its objectives, and if it is, I can't imagine that we wouldn't place a restriction on a contract. Little May I argue on? By whose objections? Who says what the objectives are?

David Marr

DAVID MARR is an arts-law graduate of Sydney University where he was very active dramatically. Having decided not to pursue a legal career, he spent two years in a marketing agency and, before coming to Sydney, worked for three years in the British civil service and abroad in India, Japan and France before returning to Australia. He now writes the arts pages of the *National Times*.



We were catching the problem of Dead End Girls. It has been exhaustively discussed in the press, but the trust's rationale for involvement in that all-imported, all-unsuccessful venture remains at the heart of any public account, and the public



defence of the trust's entrepreneurial role.

Mary It seems hard to square the import of shows such as *Dead Fred* [with] the development of independent theatre.

Joynton-Smith Possibly you, in that particular case — but no paper it had as much — let's call it a "spectre appeal" — as far as we were concerned as any of the trustees from overseas, the Royal Shakespeare Company or anything else.

Karel It has to be one of the best cases, as paper that's ever been seen in Australia on stage at any time. The actual product did not live up to the people on stage. I don't think that can be denied.

Joynton-Smith We certainly believed [O'Toole's standing in world theatre] was high when we arranged to do it. But I think that if that is considered to be a bad apple in the basket, and again that is a matter of opinion. I don't think the apple was anywhere near as bad by the time the show finished as possibly the time it opened. But going back, as I did this morning, just before the show was to open in the last week or so, I think that is really, by picking O'Toole the exception becomes a gone along with it sort, having certain qualities.

Mary Who from the Australian Elizabethan Trustee Trust saw *Dead Fred* [overseas] performing in the provinces of England?

Joynton-Smith Nobody.

Mary Who from the trust read the script?

Joynton-Smith Nobody.

Mary Who from the trust employed an independent ratings agency to see what the review had been?

Joynton-Smith Nobody ... but I did say if there is any dissatisfaction with our current situation with *Dead Fred* [overseas], it

is that it is one of the rare occasions, I believe, where we haven't had the quality control which we've always believed in, tried — being able to judge the product from the stable or the script, or whatever it happens to be ... and that we did not have that in the O'Toole situation. As I argue that the O'Toole situation was something where I had to make up my mind within two days, and the board. It wasn't one of those odd things. Now, if it was a mistake, and we're not capable of making mistakes in anything else — I have to think we don't make too many — but if it was a mistake, it was a mistake. And I'm certainly not prepared to defend for hours and hours what can be considered a nice cake and that's a matter of opinion at the time.

Karel I think the word "misuse" is being used too much. The public didn't necessarily think it was a mistake, the critics certainly did, but the public didn't.

Mary But the public did I mean, as a commercial undertaking.

Karel As a commercial undertaking, certainly, yes you're right, it failed. But the public, that went in and I would say enjoyed the production very much.

Mary You say the reason was a "flop off"? Is there a policy now that such a venture won't be enlisted into again? Has a lesson been learned?

Joynton-Smith If there is a lesson to be learned quickly. You must be able to check your quality, or to know that it comes from a quality stable. And that we did not have the opportunity to do except we did get some overseas sources as quickly as we could.

Karel Which were good.

Mary You didn't also get the critical slatherings from the English press did you?

Karel We were given what we were told were the critics from the provinces where they'd played.

Mary On a point of information — were there full capping?

Karel Absolutely complete from beginning to end, which you can see

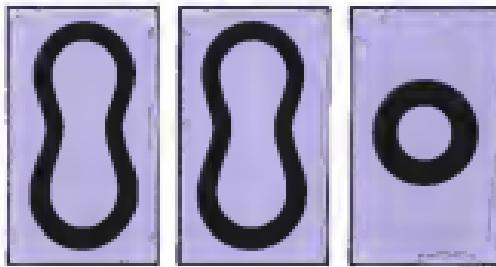
The trust hasn't struck the jackpot with the Theatre Royal series over the last production, it thinks it will come out "to be up or a bit down." But the trust is ahead when you add up the results of commercial investment over the last seven years says Joynton-Smith. "We have not actually spent in the set, one dollar of government money on commercial investment. And that money has been used to pick up the losses in excess of these other shows. It probably sounds like an accounting exercise, but that's got to be done at some stage."

Any loss the trust incurs on a commercial investment, he points out is treated like loss on O'Toole is put at slightly more than \$1,000. "At all times, we restrict the amount [of the entrepreneurial fund] which can be used up, the amount of loss which can occur in a commercial investment."

But in future the trust won't publish these figures, which are about to go on the secret list. Joynton-Smith explained: "If Mr Bradley makes a profit or a loss, that's his business, and the same with J.C. Williamson's, and therefore we have taken a little bit off, I think generally, concern that if we publish in our accounts which particular shows [of them] we lost money on as commercial investments and which we didn't, we are giving away the information of the accounts of individual entrepreneurs." The figures will be given, in confidence, only to the Australia Council. Mary I've been fascinated by the trust's [ambivalence] attitude to touring international theatre companies. I can't think of a better function for the trust than breaking down the parochial barriers between city audiences to Australia.

Joynton-Smith Right. I support that.





but I went through our annual reports, which is the best way I can refresh my memory, to see the results of the interstate drama companies that we've created since we started the programme in 1970, and every one of them did not break even, every one of them lost money. So therefore I believe one cannot approach a company or Australian drama company on the basis that it's at least going to break even. Now, I'm not suggesting for a moment that one shouldn't still keep bringing them, because we're doing it, and we've got *'Farewell, Tasmania'* at the moment going into Melbourne and Brisbane. But, you do it with the knowledge, surely the financial knowledge that you are not going to break even at the box.

Marcia Can these tours be profitably discussed in terms of "breaking even", in terms of cash? Aren't we getting right to the heart of what subsidised theatrical enterprises do for, and isn't that precisely the function of something like the trust?

Jerome Smith Yes.

Marcia Well now, surely you can't just go to Sydney, or to a lesser city?

Jerome Smith Yes, certainly.

Indeed. But this is the very point why we say we must have other involvement, because our involvement in main commercial theatre will enable us to do that more and more. Like you can only lose so much money on an interstate company, and then the money runs out. So you can do very more, because you haven't got any more. **Marcia** We are concerned with your public image in Australia. Your public image as the ensemble looks to us rather bad and we're trying to discover why it is bad. We think it's because you bring in overseas shows on the ground that there's then supposed to be money for indigenous shows, but when the figures come out you're a little up or a little down. It hasn't happened. **Nigel** Just a second. I think, in fact, if we get back over our figures, our projections have in fact shown profits over the past year. You're isolating three areas from the ensemble.

Jerome Smith I can appreciate who might befool the public to think the trust sets itself a national mission, but allocates grants in reality. A coalition of activists is almost probably unavoidable with one set of proposals to promote Australian theatre, and another (possibly contradictory) set to raise the cash to do it. The way out of the bind is for the trust to hit a commercial jackpot — but the jackpot never seems to come.

If the Elizabethan Trust becomes the nation's official entrepreneurial, it will have as a guiding principle of the business (as graphics on the walls of their new and inevitable more modest offices) "Take your time". There is no limit on the loss the trust sustains as entrepreneur, non-commercial journal of the record. The trust has never broken even. It is very cautious.

Jerome Smith An fundamental disagreement with Wayne Morley (see Morley's article in the June issue of *Theatre Australia*) over the prospects of taking control and commercialising free subscription theatre and turning them successfully. You must take your time, says the trust, give publicity and marketing a chance, wait for theatres that are just right for the show. The trust has raised democratic possibilities below that principle, and it might be right, but it seems years a human foible even on an interstate promotion.

In private, others at the trust wonder if an entrepreneurial can work within the structure of committees and boards imposed at Downing Street, and lately the trust has not had much success securing the grants it has been after. In less Gordon Chater and Benjamin Franklin to William Morley, just negotiating an i.t. for the trust. Morley appears to have got Chater on just the sort of terms the trust was fighting the National

Playhouse of several organisations, the administration of the Playwrights' Conference came under the trust's entrepreneurial budget. No longer. In a general administrative budget of \$225,000 there was not the money to help them any longer and they were axed that year. Jerome Smith spoke to Jacque Rotti and said, "Well, look, if you're interested in an administrator this sort of problem, I'm sure we can find a sublibrarian downstate where you can bring your files in and get a filing-cabinet and if you want someone to do your minutes of meetings and that sort of thing and send them out."

"...and then away we went. And ultimately we finished up by the time of the last conference, it was one person locally in Melbourne for at least four months of the year, plus asking for an assistant. In the end it was just me possible."

A small but highly significant boost to the nation's theatre was cut all, inexplicably. It is those crucial decisions of policy often as hard to administer, and frequently as damaging to the public image of the trust, that *Theatre Australia* will examine in a second interview with the trust. With the results of the Coopers and Lybrand report known, the trust will be in a position to say where it goes from after this (as Jeff Kast calls theory the "interior plan" since it has the opera and ballet).





Giselle saves the season

'Never has the feel and smell of classic French ballet been so real'



Martin Bryant in Giselle

For some people the year's Sydney season of the Australian Ballet has been a disappointment.

"It's under-rehearsed," they say. "Not enough substance." Others have said there was too much "technical" and not enough entertainment. On the one hand, the season has been too experimental, and on the other, not experimental enough.

Well, for instance, the season is far from being *thin*; there is enough strong choreography within *Serebriakoff*, *Sokolov* and *Reynolds*. And to boot at least two of those other full-length ballets.

But the famous Sydney audiences do not want compactness, brevity and unison. The famous Sydney audiences want a full-

length ballet with lots of variations, lots and a bit more — putting ballet on a par with the Australian Opera, which we all know hardly ever puts its nose around the door since the 20th century.

One would have thought by now that these people had realized the essential difference in both content and manner of interaction between ballet and theater/opera. Ballet dance, whatever you want to call it, can, if it wants to, add a new dimension to story-telling, but it can't be "about" nothing and almost result, if it wants to.

Such a proposition is well compounded in Balanchine's masterpiece *Serebriakoff*. *Serebriakoff* is purity itself. Its language is in-

tegral and complete. It is about nothing else but dance. It's the sort of work that always challenges an audience's imagination, it forces the audience to follow its argument and add drama if they feel so inclined.

Sydney audiences don't like to exert themselves, therefore, the most commonly heard descriptions of this work are: "too busy", "confused", and "a lot of needless wandering about". I am surely tempted to call foul words.

Now, I grant that the performance of the ballet by the dancers of the company is not the best, and that the conductor, Alan Barker, gives them no help whatsoever, but still, cannot these people see the sublime logic, the restrained, unified emotion, the beauty and the exquisite mathematics of this work?

I can see why Balanchine is so wary of having his works performed by companies other than his own New York City Ballet. This company has been created solely by himself; his entire philosophy of the dance is personified in its dancers. They have all been as light, quick, long and leggy, chic and totally trained to make his density of concepts seem effortless and simple.

The Australian Ballet dancers have practically none of these qualities. On the opening night, *Serebriakoff* was marred by quavering, slow and slappy movement and a general ignorance of the geometry that makes it.

Proper accuracy is needed here. With entire corps de ballet entries intermeshing, with turns, skips and steps shot right and and within the overall path of the music, the team simply must go like clockwork, one had moment and the fabric is irreparably torn. With our dancers, the turns, the coulisses, the entry and partly finished ensembles made the beautiful jewel sit a jolting, bonyrig dance class.

I thought that maybe the solos would save the performance, but when Martin Rose and Marilyn Jones went into their solo, supported fell to the ground with Karen Cox in the so-called "Angel of Death" role, and fell as their backbones with an audible bump — that was the end.

I can see the point of having the work in the repertoire, no company should be without it, it is an test of pure dance technique in any dancer. But, the performance does show that Miss Williams will still have an uphill climb to get this company to the standard of any other internationally known ballet company.

When it comes to the second work on the third programme, my banter was unimproved any by the weary sarcasm bath-

callifications of John Butler's *Sorrows*. This work has dated faster than *Sorrows*, but it is just another repetition of Butler's usual banal over-manicured, over-weight, "grabbing-and-grasping" choreography.

Unlike Balanchine's *Boléro*, *Sorrows* has no affinity with its music; it goes on over-blown way despite whatever piece of music is playing at the time. It's just the same with *Carmen* shown here. *Never and After* But here, of course, the Australian Ballet's dancers were more at home. If you did a step wrongly or didn't do one at all, — well just shrug your shoulders a little more and no one will notice.

Marilyn Ross, in the lead part, looked down-right embarrassed at all the fogged-up going-on in the skin drama of *Kassandra*. Love, dependence, lust and infidelity. And Alisa Alzari, as *Sophistis*, looked perplexed and there throughout, probably worrying about her body making off on everyone else in her wig-draping.

With the last part of the programme, *Romances*, Act 3, things improved a little. Here, in the Fringe warhorse, the dancing was fiery, frenetic, well poised and arranged — everything it should be.

There was poor excuse for a set and once again hide-help coming from the conductor, but the group work, the pas de deux and solo was done with gusto and enthusiasm. It's a really audience piece of choreography though, one of those wedding celebrations that round off so many 19th-century Petipa works with a bang. And, it hardly needs to be said, just the sort of thing that an overacted and over-extinguished audience loves — as often required.

But the show still had an act up its sleeve, the van Praagh reworking of the Coralli-Perrini classic, *Giselle*.

Van Praagh won the Grand Prix de Paris for this interpretation and one can see why. Peter has the feel and smell of classic French ballets been so real. Never has the anguish drama of this little sylvan double-crossed by a philandering prince been so palpable.

Van Praagh has compensated a lot of the original innovation for the last part, dance of such exquisite restraint, tenderness and delicacy by Marilyn Ross. Yet she has interpolated a few extra bits of dancing for the Prince and for the peasants, using some of the basic mechanisms of *Cochetti*, but always with a view to strengthening the period flavor, so that some of the movements in both the first and second acts look as if they have just stepped out of those mid-19th-century lithographs by Delacroix.

It is a superb interpretation. The dancers know that, and throughout the season it was danced with masterful assurance.

If the dancers can bring the same assurance of technique and poetic application to Woodham's new production of *Swan Lake* later this year the Australian Ballet will have another masterpiece to measure in its repertoire. ■

Going Home

'... it is remarkably valuable to have a range of works published so reasonably in one volume'



Going Home (and other plays) by Alma De Groot
Currency Press P/B, Ltd., Sydney 1977
Recommended retail price \$4

We have become so used to Australian authors being treated satirically and abusively in the theatre that Alma De Groot's recent major play, *Going Home*, comes to the stage with extraordinary impact. It is now published by Currency along with the more unusual *Jean Adams Shows* and *Playfully, All Right* in a fairly straightforward edition of her plays. To the director working on any one of these plays it should be threatening to compare them, and to the rest of us it is remarkably valuable to have a range of works published so reasonably in the one volume.

The darker two of these plays — *actresses Jean Adams* and *Playfully, All Right* — work in a more restricted style than that possibly looks back to De Groot's *The After-life of Another Country*. Perhaps

for this reason, it is easy to see *The Jean Adams Shows* as a short treat on the battered-baby syndrome, but within the framework of the television interview the playwright finds room to show the bitterness of sexual and domestic life which leads to the death of Jean baby. The interview emphasizes, in the audience, in the social callousness towards a particularly desperate figure like Jess, but the flatness back and forward allow the husband's character to be presented with some sympathy. In the much shorter *Playfully, All Right*, a young hoarder is confronted by a desperate ladybird who compulsively moves things about his room. The sexual motivation is as obscure as the deepest, but both are kept in balance by De Groot's comic treatment of this situation.

Both the short plays above, look like preparatory works for *Going Home*, which dramatizes a group of Australian expatriate artists living and partying in Canada. If one sees the whole lot, then De Groot's earlier women have developed considerably. Like Jess, Zee is a compulsive shopper, but guilty to the point where she suddenly purchases potted plants by locking them away from her husband's memory. There is undoubtedly a sexual dimension in the obsession with furniture in the play too, but, as John Sattler warns in his introduction to *Going Home*, it is a mistake to see the play as a sentimental account of wife-baiting, ugly people etc., and it is the laudably naturalistic tone of the play which allows the playwright to move between comic and serious elements. *Going Home* works in a refreshingly non-conformist way — even the aggressive Tom has a sympathetic speech which brings his boy back to him, and the playwright is not afraid of intimate moments between Zee and Jim, the central pair, when the masks come down. All other things aside, Alma De Groot has written five superbly acidic characters. Whether the characters are really as any one "going home" remains for me one of the enigmatic aspects of the play, but, as Max Cullen says in his fairly controversial comments on this edition, it does constitute an attack on the trendy attitudes which lead writers to project themselves before they have any sense of identity. ■

B

Who's Who in the Theatre

"... one must realise the immense task facing the editors and applaud them for . . . a magnificent result"

Who's Who in the Theatre, edited by Ian Herbert, with Christine Baxter and Robert E. Foley. Phoenix, London (15 pounds) and Ginn Research Division (550).

One of the two most valuable reference books for theatre buffs must surely be *Who's Who in the Theatre*, the 16th edition of which has recently been published simultaneously in England and America.

Rounding out 1288 pages, it has been edited by Ian Herbert, assisted by Christine Baxter and Robert E. Foley, in association with an editorial board consisting of actors Richard Attenborough, John Gielgud, Michael Redgrave and Dorothy Tutin, and producers Alexander H. Cohen, Emile Lauter and Peter Sander.

First published in 1912, apparently only two people have figured in all editions: Cooley Courtland and Arthur Saylor. The last edition has been completely revised throughout in a more modern and readable typeface, which also means that entries take up less space than previously.

Unlike most other kinds of *Who's Who*, that for the Theatre never becomes entirely obsolete, since one constantly returns to previous volumes for details of actors who have died, cast lists and much other information. The eighth edition (1938), for instance, contained features long since

deleted: theatrical family trees, telegrams who snared onto the page, Commedie Performances, roll-call honour for the 1914-18 War and theatrical war. The 14th edition (1967) included 12 pages of photographs from productions of the past.

Dropped from the current edition is the history in the theatre section and the general index to London playbills (1921-60). This column does, however, embrace London, New York, Stratford-upon-Avon, Chichester Festival and Ontario's Stratford Festival playbills for 1971-5, and a separate London and New York biography list provides details of London and New York theatres, plus openings of new ones, lists biographies from previous years now deleted, as well as obituaries since 1971-6.

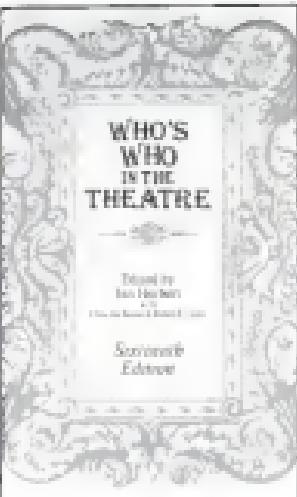
Coming to the main body of the book, the biographical section which takes up 944 pages, everyone is naturally going to pick upon those notable characters and others whom they consider should not be included. Questioned, too, may be the fact that entries are not confined to performers but also take in directors, producers, playwrights, designers and even some non-arts critics and politicians.

It is not difficult to light upon omissions and factual errors, particularly in dates. And it can be very irritating to find some well-known fact not recorded, particularly when the information must be available. As a minor example, Coalhouse's current biopic is correctly shown as Vincent Price, but the entry for Price indicates wife Mary Grant.

Overcoming such anomalies, one must realize the immense task facing the editors, and applaud them for what, after all, is really a magnificent result. Having interviewed theatre folk for many years, I know all too well how frequently they can put their personal facts addled, and these frequently have to be checked and re-checked. Re-checking all the facts contained in that *Who's Who* is a chore I, for one, should not relish.

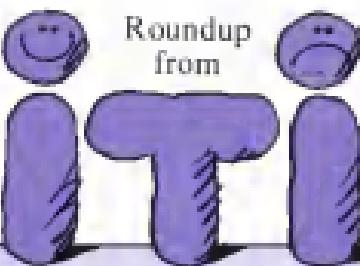
Most people will consider the Australian coverage notably inadequate. Perhaps here I may be allowed to add a personal note. In the previous edition, it seemed the only Australian featured currently living in the country was Ross Hoddink. I took it upon myself to point out this discrepancy to the editor and was asked to suggest likely names which could be put before the editorial board, keeping such a list extremely short. This I did but, for some reason, not many of these people feature in the current volume.

I understand, however, that the next edition probably will contain more Australian entries. Lacking an elsewhere *Who's Who in the Theatre*, it is to be hoped future volumes may even go as far as to include details of Australian theatres and playbills.



Roundup from

Australian Centre, International Theatre Institute



International Theatre Institute (ITI) Australian Centre 173 Darling Street, Perth, Post Office Box 17 King Street, NSW 2001 President: Roger Gorman; Secretary: Maria Thomsen; Editor: Susan Patterson.

DIRECTORS OF CANADIAN PLAYS AND PLAYWRIGHTS

This very interesting directory contains synopses of more than 300 plays (including children's plays), biographies of 100 playwrights and an outline of the work of the Playwrights' Co-operative. Canada's "largest" collection source for contemporary Canadian drama.

The Playwrights' Co-operative, launched five years ago, "publicizes and distributes contemporary stage plays, provides a reading and consultation service for new and developing Canadian playwrights and acts as an agency and service bureau."

Scripts may be ordered from the co-op as long as they are prepared and drawings are available.

Copies of the directory are available for \$10 (canadian) each to cover postage and handling from The Playwrights' Co-operative, 8 York Street, 6th floor, Toronto, M5J 1E2, Ontario, Canada.

INT'L THEATRE WORKSHOP

The International Dance Section of the ITI has organised a 10-day seminar on music theatre training at the Bay Hart Theatre, Antibes, France, from 13 to 22 August.

Preliminary work will consist of group exercises in movement and voicing/singing, as well as individual help in singing, acting and dancing. Instruction will mostly be given by members of the Bay Hart Theatre, although participants may make prior arrangements.

No fees will be required. However, there will be a modest charge for accommodation. People interested in the seminar should contact the ITI Australia Centre.

THEATRE DES NATIONS

The Journal of the Théâtre des Nations,

1977, has been cancelled. Plans to arrange that ITI Festival in connection with the Nancy or Aragon festivals fell through because a subsidy was refused by the French Government.

The festival of the Théâtre des Nations, 1978, will probably be held in Caracas, Venezuela, and the 1980 World festival, in 1979, in Hamburg. The 1975 festival was held in Warsaw, and the 1976 festival in Belgrade.

INTERNATIONAL THEATRE TRAINING

The International Theatre Institute has arranged a contact office for developing an information exchange about international theatre training. The office is part of the Belgian ITI Centre and can be reached by writing to: Bureau de Liaison Internationale des Ecoles de Théâtre C/o Conservatoire Royal, 14 rue Pergier B—4000 Liège, Belgium.

INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY

The British Theatre Institute invites membership to its newsletter, which goes free to members, "aims to report social and forthcoming developments in the theatre arts in Britain".

Membership rates are three pounds sterling for individuals from overseas and 10 pounds for corporations, who receive five copies of the BJI Newsletter. Cheques should be made payable to British Theatre Institute and applications should be sent to: Membership Secretary, British Theatre Institute, c/o No. 58, 1a Bedford Square, London WC1B 3HU.

THEATRE FRONTIERS

A conference entitled "Across Frontiers of Theatre" will be held in Canterbury, England, at the University of Kent, from 14 to 17 September 1979.

The aim of the conference is to explore popular drama and entertainment in its historical and contemporary forms. Other topics will include the interrelationship between film and theatre, and political theatre.

For further information write to: Dr Louis James, Keay's College, The University, Canterbury CT2 7 NP, Kent.

THEATRE HISTORY

An annual course in Theatre History organised by the Instituto Internazionale per la Ricerca Teatrale is to be held in Venice from 9 to 14 September 1977.

The theme will be "Aspects of Realism and Naturalism in the Theatre of the Second Half of the 19th Century in Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, the Netherlands, Poland and Hungary".

For further information write to: The Director, Instituto Internazionale per la Ricerca Teatrale, Casa di Goldoni, S. Tomà, 2794-30123, Venezia, Italy.

TECHNICAL EXHIBITIONS

The second CISCO — International Fair of Cinema, Theatre, Conservation Hall, Production Equipment and Related Materials — will be held in Paris at the Parc des Expositions, Porte de Versailles, from 1 to 5 October 1977. For an information file and a personal invitation granting free access to CISCO, professionals wishing to attend should write to: Marie-Christine Avezac, International Assistant CISCO, Commissariat General à l'Expo, 91200, Neuilly, France.

907 341 5474,
90997471048

The general manager of Musica Viva, Mr Donald McPheadry, writes: "Musica Viva in Australia 'has voyage' for a tour from 16 November until 30 December 1977 covering S.E.A., which includes six ports, local accommodation, surface transport and tickets to 18 musical performances in Rome, Florence, Vienna, Salzburg, Munich, Zurich, Paris and London, as well as sightseeing in Italy, Austria, Germany, Switzerland, France and England."

Musica Viva's administrative officer of international tours, Suzanne Gleeson, will accompany the group and will be glad to supply additional information at 69-79 Clarence Street, Sydney, NSW, 2000.

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BUMPER SEASON IN NEW YORK

A.B. Weiner, formerly Professor of Theatre at the University of New South Wales, is Professor of Theatre at the State University of New York at Albany. He is the author of three books and many articles, mostly on Shakespeare. He has also published several studies on the 19th-century Sydney stage. George Coetzee, one of Australia's best playwrights, thinks him "the greatest living expert on classical repertory." In his spare time he writes drama plays, including recently a production of *A Siberian Novel* (Drama in Melbourne).

It happens every year around this time, and like the pains of childbirth, we forget that it was exactly like this last year. I am speaking of the winter season at New York. It should have arrived on 21 March, but according to the polar blasts that caused up Seventh Avenue it is still winter. We have forgotten that we should have remembered that spring never comes as far north as New York, so go directly from winter into summer. We are writing, then, the summer is over and signal the winding down of yet another New York theatrical season.

It is probably presumption for one to try to sum up everything that has opened or closed during the 1976-7 season, and conclude that this was a good or bad average season, but from the financial point of view it was a bumper year. In the rest of what has been called a "tiring off-season (depression), one sees more Costelloes, Luceans, and Marzanas on the streets than ever before, and in spite of the skyrocketing costs of Broadway tickets, cheap seats are rare. How come? American business ingenuity has once more triumphed in discovering a way to charge more for tickets than the market will bear, while at the same time netting

overcharging the market. At present the price of a ticket for an ordinary, non-musical Broadway show is a bottom figure of \$1.25 to a top of \$18.17.20. That is simply too expensive for many people, so the producers found a way to have their cake and eat it, to keep the theatre full without lowering their prices. There is a booth in Forty-ninth Street and Broadway where "twotiers" are sold. "Twotiers" of course, stands for "two-tiered seating", an old American system. An hour or so before curtain time people begin to congregate at the powder booth where they can buy for half-price a ticket for almost any Broadway show that is not sold out. So if you just want to go to the theatre regardless of what you see, and if you don't mind queuing up, you can spend as little as \$6 for a ticket. While this practice has successfully revitalised the New York stage, discount will open and close. One of the most notable of recent changes was a division-and-quartered Caesar and Cleopatra with Rex Harrison and Elizabeth Ashley. It closed after 12 performances and costumed a loss of \$1,000,000. Now Mr Harrison can go back to what he does best and does best, making television documentaries for American audiences.

I am afraid that the most exciting aspect of Broadway at the moment is the financial rather than the artistic. There is a kind of commercialism on Broadway that is, I believe, unique in the world. It really must be seen to be believed. And I am not arguing that art must be kept pure from the money-changers. I think that the only artists who criticise money are failed artists. Money is as necessary to the theatre as action, but this is all that I am talk-

ing about. The Theatre district is like a bazaar, a department store, a stock market, thousands of people buying, hundreds of people selling. One doesn't just buy a ticket, one makes a deal. Ticket agents — independent businesses — invest in tickets the way stockbrokers invest in shares of stocks. The ticket agents, who make their profit by taking on a stiff surcharge to all tickets they sell, have first choice on tickets when they are first put on sale. If they believe that a certain show is a "winner" they will buy heavily. New York businessmen, who are visited by buyers from all over the world, keep a supply of hand-tipped theatre tickets to sweeten deals, to help them get orders. Supplying tickets is a place where no one can afford to be a beginner.

Only laymen refer to plays as plays or actors as actors. The industry refers to shows as "properties". That is, an actor who has had wide exposure on television or the screen, and who is expected therefore to attract a large audience, is a "hot property". Broadway producers, who must invest huge amounts to get a show on the stage, try to reduce their risks as much as possible by having as many "hot properties" as they can afford. Shows must, therefore, be packaged much like a tube of toothpaste or a box of detergent.

Here is a case. Back in 1971 Maria Callas, a mildly successful Broadway lyricist, decided that a musical based on the comic strip "Little Orphan Annie" had great promise. At this point she had not put it in paper, nor did she have an artistic inspiration. He had only an idea to make money. It was just a naked idea, however, for there had already been successful musicals based on Lil' Abner and Charlie Brown. Callas had to package her idea.

'Shows must be packaged like a tube of toothpaste

or a box of detergent'



He got a certain Thomas Meehan to write the book, and Charles Stroesser, a mildly successful Broadway composer, to compose the score. Charmin himself would write the lyrics. Five years later, there was a string of successes. A really hot property had developed. They began to sign up all of the best theatrical properties around. Eddie Nichols, to produce and direct *Annie*. Six years later, in 1937, the package was ready to be put up with a pretty but absolutely necessary ribbon media hype. Thus, for the past two months stories and photographs about *Annie* are presented every time you open up the *New York Times* as well as many national magazines. The effect of all this publicity? *Annie* must be made a bit over before it opens. Indeed, by opening night — which is almost upon us — *Annie* is not sold out for the next three months, the show is going to a failure and will probably close in a week or two. At any good exhibition one tries to package his product so make it appealing in the market place — space aside from what is actually inside the package — A user has been thoroughly packaged. If it succeeds, it will make a fortune, but just at token value, but from the cast albums, T-shirts, dolls, future royalties, perhaps film rights, etc., etc., of course. If it fails, perhaps \$750,000 of other people's money will have been lost, but that is a pittance by way of it.

I find that a good deal more interesting than most of the plays that are currently running. My greatest disappointment was a new play by Ronald Rabinov, *Cold Storage*. It has received excellent notices, and I was able to get a ticket only after Mr. Rabinov graciously agreed to meet me at the box office and give me one of his house seats. Two of Rabinov's earlier plays — *Merry, Moon and Night* and *Assassins of the Fifth Army* — I consider to be among the best American plays for at least the last decade. Indeed, I had the pleasure of directing the former of these plays and it was an extremely satisfying experience. But *Cold Storage* simply does not make it. It presents us with two cancer patients in a New York hospital, one a slovenly American grandmother of advanced years, the other a sophisticated Jewish art dealer. The two acts these women discuss tell's problems, cancer, and deathbed. No specific problems are posed and no solutions are offered. The writing by Marion Tolson and Michael Lipton is fine, as is the direction by Joel Zwick, and the set by Kurt Lander. Indeed, everything about the production is excellent except the play. In this one the parts are greater than the whole, the characters are strong and well-defined, and the dialogue is witty and even endearing. But *Cold Storage* is far closer to a continuing series on television than it is to a stage play. On writing a series of television drama, the single unavoidable rule is that the protagonist must be exactly the same at the end of the show as he was at the beginning, for next week he must begin all over again. In stage drama the opposite is true. The protagonist must have a change of fortune, or motivation. Without

the audience the action cannot be complete, for all actions that are complete must, by necessity, end in either success or failure. *Cold Storage* fails because it does not have a complete nature, as one walks up the aisle after the final curtain, the process of forgetting what one has just seen is already well advanced.

I could make almost identical remarks about Simon Gray's *Overtones* (played a London production that is still for reasons I cannot fathom, running after one year). Tom Courtenay's acting is all that one could wish, and Harold Pinter's direction was superb. I have always thought that Pinter was a far better dramatist than a playwright, and this production strengthened that belief. In that *Overtones* Engaged Bits are everywhere — the protagonist is exactly the same at the beginning as he is at the end — and it would be boring to recall the events that transpire to bring about the stalemate.

The best show in New York at the moment is *Sly Fox* by Larry Gelbart, which is based on Ben Jonson's *Volpone*. It is masterfully directed by Arthur Penn, and wonderfully acted by George C. Scott, Jack Palance, John Hollis, Bob Doherty, and Harry Belafonte. Larry Gelbart's greatest success have been adaptations rather than originally conceived works. He is best known for his television series, *M*A*S*H*, which was based on the film, and *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to Our Forum*, which was based on notes from Plautus. Mr. Gelbart is a very funny man, or, to put them more precisely, he seems to have little difficulty in making his audience laugh. I think there is a misconception here. To make this is a pastime, *Sly Fox* goes more laughs a minute than *Volpone*, but *Volpone* is a better comedy if we could rate comedies on a laugh-meter, then Jack Palance and Bob Hope would be funnier than Shakespeare and Melville.

The art of writing comedy would seem to comprise two distinct talents: the ability to create funny jokes, and the ability to create funny characters. The latter is clearly the more difficult, and elusive talent. Falstaff and Malvolio are unforgettable, jokes are intrinsically forgettable. Mr. Gelbart's talent seems to be that of taking an already-created character and putting in his mouth an embarrassing number of jokes, one after the other. He is really quite dazzling along these lines.

I think, however, that Mr. Gelbart's triumph was less what he did to *Volpone* than what he didn't do. Specifically, he left Jonson's characters intact. He changed the locale and time to San Francisco in the late 19th century, and he changed the characters' names. Volpone becomes Powell J. Sly, Mache becomes Simon Able, Volpone becomes Lawyer Crouch, Corvina becomes Adelle Crouch, and Corvina becomes Adelle Trunkle. (These are really unfortunate choices compared to Jonson's wicked manglings.) Further, Gelbart has written out all of the sub-plot material, and thus has changed Jonson's highly complex plot into a very simple one

The action of *Sly Fox* concerns itself only with the dicing of Craven, Crouch, and Trunkle. Gone are the characters of Sir Pecke Would-Be, Lady Would-Be, and Penelope and all of the plenty stuff they are involved in.

But Gelbart has done more than merely simplify *Volpone* by his sentimentalized it. While Jonson savagely assigned vice and folly, giving them no quarter; while he created a world of animals representing a whole gallery of mankind's most vicious characteristics, Gelbart seems to think that such behaviour is good, respect for. At the end of Jonson's play, Volpone has his wealth confiscated and he is imprisoned in the hospital of the Incurable. Mache is whipped and then imprisoned in the galley. In *Sly Fox*, Sly and Simon, having had their wealth as much of their go off triumphant as play's end, to set up business elsewhere and, presumably, duplicate their literary on other unscrupulous gals. That, I submit is one of the very antithesis of Jonson's purpose in writing *Volpone* and thus, as a play to be read and performed, it is greatly lacking, as a stageworthy vehicle, however, the superb

The production is brilliant. I had never seen George C. Scott on the stage before I had seen him only in film, and I had concluded that he was a great actor, unquestionably America's Best. Well, I must repeat that Scott is not a great actor. He lacks the transcendental imagination that separates great actors from the merely good. His own personality is too strong for him to submerge it to the degree where he actually becomes someone else. Yet he is a good actor, perhaps even a very good actor, and sometimes that can be more satisfying to an audience than to witness a great performance. While in his films he bestrides the rest of his fellow actors like a Colossus, in *Sly Fox* he was just one of an excellent cast. I concluded that his overpowering of his fellow cast members in the film is more of a comment on the type of actor who works in Hollywood than it is of Scott. In *The Land of the Bleak*, after all, the one-eyed man is king. In the production he was playing with a group of amateur New York professionals, and they were not about to be overwhelmed. There was only one person in the cast who was obviously out of her depth, Trish Van Devere. If one were unaware that she is the wife of George Scott, one might very well have his story trying to figure out why she was cast. It has been announced recently that Scott will leave the company, but the production is so good that I do not think that that will make the slightest difference. ■



Peter Kenna's

A HARD GOD



Barney Glew
Peter Kenna
Peter Cattaneo
as Paddy, Graham
House as Dan.

"... in some ways a play . . . whose fine qualities have not yet been adequately acknowledged"

Since *The Legend Of King O'Malley*, which, they say, set the great ball rolling, good men know how many new Australian plays have been given an airing in our theatres. Looking back over the so-called "intermission", one is beginning to feel confident about which handful of plays from the whole welter a going to stand the test of time, and will still be of interest to theatrical management. not 10, say

scholars, come the year 2000. One such play, I suggest, is Peter Kenna's *A Hard God* — in some ways a play, although certainly not neglected, whose fine qualities have not yet been adequately acknowledged.

A Hard God stands out from the rest of new Australian plays, so far as one can generalise about the rest, in a number of ways, and especially by avoidance of some

of its clichés and excesses. It eschews Oberon, the malicious middle-class meddlesome, baffled pantomime, surreal scenes, hairs and blatant four-letter language, sexual daring. Rather than any of those obsessions, it has what good and great plays have always had: a grappling with the complex problems of living, and genuine feeling for human beings (with with their difficulties). In this of course it has company.

A kingdom of all worthiness literature is the arena of the sympathetic amateur, and *A Hard God* achieves this arena. Peter Kenna has that quality which is not easy to find in so many of his colleagues,

and which Katherine Bradbury has so rightly dispensable compassion. He has obviously a great affection for the people in his play, and a deeply felt sympathy for their struggles in the web of both religious faith and family relationships. The intensity of the writing causes those feelings to be shared with the audience and the reader.

We sympathise with the characters' involvement with the play's central issue of

which is at the centre of his or her being, and on which depends, and which therefore explains, all of his or her behaviour and attitudes. Martin's spiritual action, for example, needs to be "to name". Aggie's "to put her family first". This essential clarity and consistency of conception gives the characters a strong engagement. They are recognisably human.

The characters are, moreover, attractively Australian, exemplifying the



N.S.W. National
Theatre: Aggie
Noddy and
Martin, Geoff
Cohen in Don
Carney's *A Hard God*.

the difficulty of maintaining faith in a loving God when he imposes a harsh life-experience and when the Church exacts severe duties and disciplines. We sympathise with Dan's huge tolerance and the influences of the urban placed upon him by hisulating brothers. We understand Aggie's love, her forthrightness, her essential toughness. We feel for Martin's struggle with the gods (because this answer is so clearly and tolerantly expressed in the play) and his efforts to express himself in writing. We appreciate young Jim's efforts to reconcile his sexual awakening and his position with the "fixed idea" of his upbringing.

Our sympathies are sustained even in the comic scenes. Indeed, is not achievement of the writing in its lively and loving blend of humour and pathos? Dan's reading of the paper on top of the table in order to be near the light is essentially comic, but is also moving because his half-closed eyesight is both a symptom of decline and another unfair burden for an already overtaxed man. Paddy and Monica are extravagantly comic in many ways, but a sadness, too, pervades their greater relationships.

A Hard God is a good play because it is so total. Its people live because they are realised so richly and authentically, but also conceived so simply and clearly. The playwright, like all good authors, has given each of them a discernible motivating drive

working-class stock, from which so many of us — and our values — spring. *A Hard God* is a good play because it justifies its characters' attitudes and behaviour by showing them determined by strong, irresistible social, economic and religious forces. There are few jokers of Australian writing, let alone plays, which demonstrate so vividly the Irish-Catholic culture in Australia, and which expose so powerfully the nature of the influence of The Depression on Australian families. (How accurate, for instance, is the dispensative and migratory of the Cassidy family, as to take one or ten small examples, the telling reference to the son of Captain salutes?)

In a very real sense, *A Hard God* is a sociological document. It is a history play, or at least a play in which a period — its language, habits, values, mores — is integral to the drama, as the plot and character development. I am certain that this element in the play alone will guarantee the play's survival. How amazingly woven into the fabric of the play, for example, are such language and social allusions as "He's got the murrain on her", "Rabbit", "Paddy was coming it in the barmiting business", "a bulging chaffbag", "Here you ever gone all the way with a gal?", "I'm going up to Woy Woy", "blowmen", "Cyril Angles", and "Saturday night dances".¹

The play also touches on other themes of more than ephemeral import, notably of

life and living which are related to its action: the problems of middle and old age (physical slowing down, declining strength of the marriage partner, the separation from one's home, an unstable marriage relationship which has gone on for too long); alternate brother and sister relationships; the "generation gap" problem, the problem of sex, of adolescence and in particular that of homosexual attachment. These, furthermore, the great universal theme of the function of Time, which is as beautiful as coherent, in the play.

In summary, the characters in *A Hard God* are all victims of forces beyond their control, this has always been the stuff of tragedy in literature.

One should also comment on the structure of the play. It attempts a degree of experimentation within the narrative mode — parallel actions. It was perhaps this aspect of the play which attracted harsh critical comment at the time of my first production at the Biennale Theatre, Sydney, in September 1973. H.G. Kuppen, for one, asserted that there was a serious flaw in "a lack of linkage" between the family scenes and the scenes between the two boys, Jim and Jack. This was too strict. Linkage was there if not altogether cloudy, but I think one has to concede that there was a need for greater clarity in this regard, a somewhat stronger linkage. When the play was published by Currency Press, Peter Keating had edited the first five episodes of the text, and shown Jim in the domestic circle. This eases some measure, I believe, on this problem already.

Some critics made remarks such as "The play is a trifle windy", and saw some of its long speeches and lack of action again as a flaw. These responses failed to recognise the tone of the play and its essential theme in regard to time. As Susan Denyer said in *Showbusiness*, "The family is found in this respect when the three are more separated than present, and there is the possibility for meeting over them and even understanding them, in quietness." Part of the Cassidy pathos is in the fact that home is very much grounding to a standard for the older members of the family (who indulge in the long bouts of talk), yet for young Jim oscillates between a rapid back-tracking speed on the one hand, and a slow meandering pace on the other. Thus Katherine Bradbury in *The Australian* perceived that, among other things, the form of the parallel actions of the play, by juxtaposing these speeds, represents "an experiment with time".

There are many other observations which could be made. Suffice it to repeat that *A Hard God* is a distinct fine play, and that one day it will be given a critical analysis of a depth of appreciation which is proportionate to its merit, and which has not really been possible here.

¹Reprints intended for students and teachers, with photos, excerpts from reviews, study guides, study material and commentaries by Peter Keating and Don Redel or extracts from Currency Press, 47 Jervois Road, Neutral Bay, NSW 2089.

'THE CRYSTAL PALACE' STARTS A NEW LIFE

'It has to be significant when a movie house changes to live theatre'

Some sort of theatrical history must have been made in April when Shirley Hayes and Gavan Blandell opened the Regal Theatre in Perth with Bernard Slade's *Seven Times Nine*. Few Web theatres during all directions, it has to be significant when a movie house changes to live theatre. And that's what happened at the Regal.

The Regal was built as a moviehouse in 1937 (it opened 15 April 1938) by a man called Cain, who was grandfather to playwright-producer Dorothy Hewett. In fact, Dorothy's father, Tom Hewett, was manager, and it's the Regal that figures so prominently in the Crystal Palace in Dorothy Hewett's play *Box Boys and Girls for Dolly*.

I sat close to Dorothy at the Hollywood-type gala opening on 15 April this year. It had all the trimmings, revelling girls prancing in a closed-off street under the unbroken spotlights, a band playing, performances in all directions and TV personalities driven up in large cars hired by the organisers, and half the population of Subiaco crowding round to see the free show and watch the celebrities walk up the red carpet. In fact, you couldn't see the

stage because the audience were stuck in a bottleneck, trying to swap their fancy invitations for seat tickets. But it was all good fun, and — to earn a phrase — a good time was had by all, particularly in the champagne supper later.

I asked Dorothy how a film is to be made. Just a little nostalgic, she answered. She was with her son, Dr Douglas, of Perth, and both of them brought back a bit of their adolescence that had centred round the place. And surely the Dolly of the play must have a great deal of Dorothy herself?

The Regal's interim history has been interesting. It is owned by 60-year-old Peter Baker, a Western Australian counterpart of the leading figure in Jean Lang's recently released film *The Picture Show Man*. Baker began in films in the age of silent, serving the hand-wound projector at Strelitzia, a goldfields town, now in the ghost category but then a prosperous place with a population of well over a thousand. His father was a travelling printer. Peter grew fourpence a night — three nights for a bob, he explains — and eventually worked his way up until he created his own travelling show, "Baker's Photo-Play De Luxe". It was titled, "I never remembered

names," Peter says. "After all, a picture show is just a filmed play." He worked 16 hours a day for seven days a week, and visited just about every outback town in the State.

He ended up a rich man, a notable property owner in Subiaco, where the Regal stands. And eventually he gave up his travelling show and started opening drive-in movies. He now has six or seven of them scattered around the State. He also had an expensive movie house just across the road. He bought the Regal from his friend Tom Hewett in 1944.

He's very proud of the Regal. "It was the finest theatre in the Southern Hemisphere when it was built," he claims. "And it was the first with no-air-conditioning." This isn't quite accurate by modern standards, but it did have a splendid air-cooling system which could blow in cold and extract hot air in the summer, and heat it during the winter. It wouldn't be difficult to convert that to modern air-conditioning.

Although he's still going to show movies on Sundays, he's not very pleased that the theatre has gone over to stage plays. "I've got all the money I need," he says. "So I'm not going to charge high rents." In fact, the cost of staging a musical by Perth standards, where the rental of Her Majesty's makes local productions there almost impossible. And he's never going to let the place be bulldozed or turned into a warehouse.

The success of the Hayes-Blandell show, followed by an equally successful Gordon Chater or *The Education of Agnes*, *Paradise* makes it likely that it will never cease to bring a movie house. John Thornton, Western Australian representative of Parabola Productions, and a director of *Interlude*, said that he has several other shows lined up. There is talk, too, of *Box Boys and Girls* being produced again in the theatre that played such a part in it.

If all that takes place, live theatre in Perth might have a new lease of life. The possible dampening of the stage would mean that the WA Ballet — starved of a proper home at the moment — could hope to put on shows in a profit, which would be most impossible in places like "The May" and the *Playhouse*. The west Entertainment Centre is quite as possible for anything but Edgley extravaganzas.

One can only hope that *Paradise* — Interlude keep as being as successful as the Regal as they have been up to now. No doubt the foyer will no longer be "shaking with silence" and there won't be rowdy on the houses any more.



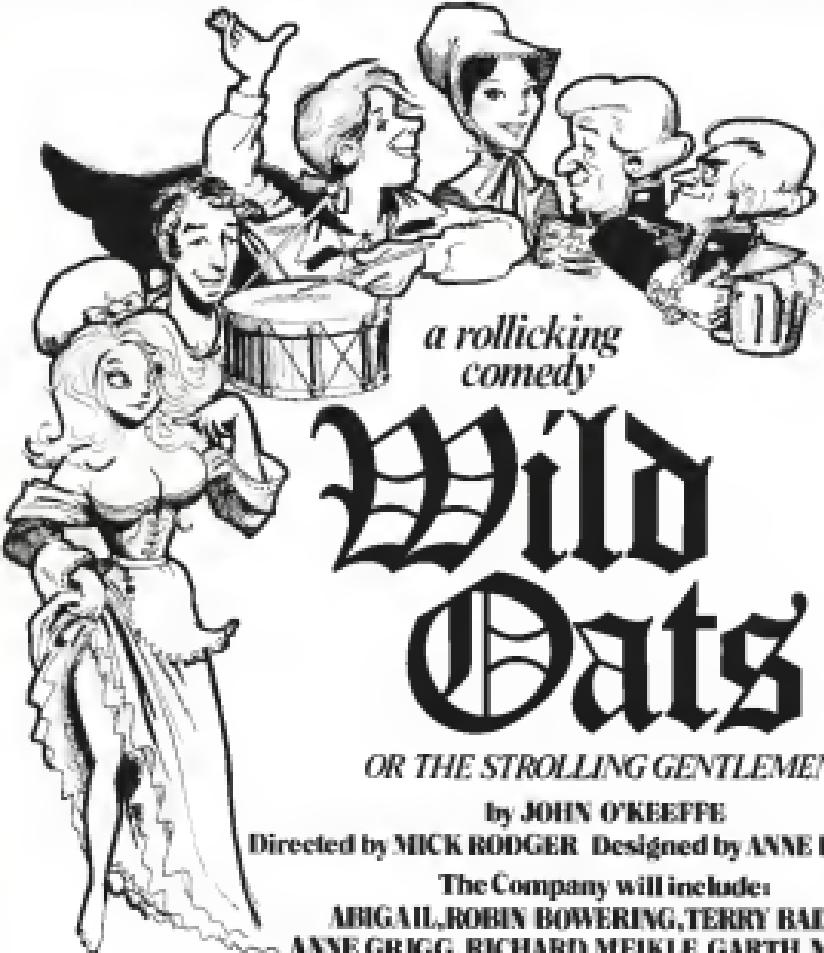
Paradise showman Peter Baker with Blandell Hayes and John Thornton of Parabola

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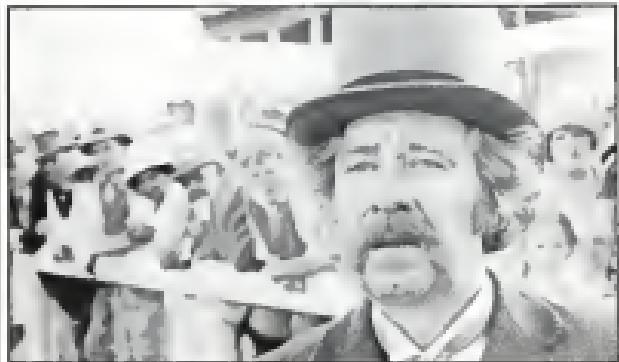
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The Picture Show Man

The FJ Holden



Contrasts in 'style and content — and possibly in aim . . .'

It must be taken as a plus for our meekly film industry that it can in the same week present two films as dissimilar, in style and content — and possibly in aim — as *The Picture Show Man* and *The FJ Holden*.

I don't say that one is "better" than the other, though I used to think that, with everything that's the matter with it, *The FJ Holden* will last longer in our consciousness.

To take *The Picture Show Man* first, it is set shortly in good old Newquay, where the gentry-like looks at city-dwellers think they should look, or as they remember it looking when they were barefoot kids fishing in a creek. Assuming they ever fished in a creek. Once on the track towards Newquay, the accompanying images proliferate embarrassingly. Anyways, in this country a dogged John Mayhew, wearing a worried frown, moustache and a red coat with a velvet collar which might have been more suitable for Broadway, shows films on mechanics' institutes and church halls while a companion brings out tarts in the borrowed piano. His territory is invaded by someone in whom he is equally taught the business, in the person of Rod Taylor, presumably hired to entertain our rural audiences. The place who will arrive?

Beyond the beginning, which is pretty, and the end, which is jolly, there is a series of established variety turns in which John Emery, Judy Morris, Lesley Whittaker, Garry McDonald, Yolana Zager, Frenchy Cargill and other performers with recognisable names take part. One inci-

dent merges with the other, and through a golden haze of recollected cue commercial deals, bumptious catalogues and meccano set-ups — *What John Holden reports to make a replight, pass at the beautiful Yolana, you know he doesn't mean it and would be appalled if we accepted his advances*. The character's strange quirky quibbles — mosquitoes hate a towel top, blisters so dangerous that a velvet collar to distract audience from frayed cuffs — John Holden does this character very well, but the character itself is a nonentity.

So what is the point of *The Picture Show Man*? Presumably films are made for commercial gain, or to say something the greater thinks should be said, or to change people's beliefs and opinions, or to preach a political sermon, or to reinforce personal ambition, or — the list is a long one.

Miss Jane Long produced *The Picture Show Man* from the recollections of Lyle Paine, whose father was one in the same period and landscape. I should say that she hoped the film would succeed commercially without having to pander to the coarse tastes of the lowest common denominator, whatever her pay per \$1.50 for a seat. But while nostalgia can be jolting up and put inside the pages of a book, in a film it needs support, such as a real understanding of inevitable changes in the human condition and their impact on occurrence in time and place. If there was a glimmer of this in the film, it gave flickeringly to Judy Morris's performance as one of those dedicated, society but uninvited ladies who pursue culture in country

towns. The film has been described as "the wrong in its simplicity". I find it simple, but not charming. And, quite often, boring.

There is not much of *The FJ Holden* that is boring, but a good deal of it is repetitive, meanders too long and we so fully detested the characters, vehicles and interiors are all too easily dismissed. Not that this could be said about the *FJ Holden* staff car as it had and splashed paintwork has been covered in country-yellow Ducco. The car is, as Michael Thorsen so doubt intended, the one thing you won't forget.

Thorsen, sometime lecturer at Film Institute film critic, maker of *Screen Wars*, is producer, director and writer of *The FJ Holden*, and that may be the reason why it doesn't really work very well. It has possibly something to do with the nature, the kind of film man who gets a name above the product, and the performers. In this case, he has a fair way to go, although I don't believe for a moment that he will not get there. If Thorsen has faith in his future, so have a lot of other people.

The FJ Holden is set in Sydney's western suburbs, of which Thorsen has rights in other big Australian cities and in numerous film rights across the Commonwealth, and in about a couple of which young men and shop assistants they pack up one night and copulate with in the *FJ Holden*.

She attaches herself to the best bit of the car, as is the way of girls in suburbia other than women, and in six times they are "putting together", showing one another a mixture of fondness and antagonism and leaving it off again only on the back seat of the car (rip-down, square gear), especially in her bedroom while her father is at the foot. The first sex, as the Matildas used to say, comes when he lets his man watch. Then is that a punch-up at a Saturday night party, says driving charges and fastback.

Thorsen's as writer — his weakest role — dodges the issue of the relationship between private-and-police and the central lover, if that's the term for them. Here the writing is shapless, flabby. He prepared one of parts of the script at the television series *Crocodile Hunter* where the writing was presented to the audience as dialogue honesty — a literary confidence trick.

Thorsen gets good performances from his co-creators, Paul Coxson and Eva Dickman, and none of the rest of the cast is especially bad.

It is hard to say where the audience for this film will come from, or if there will be any after the first curious wave.



Vespers: the great Monteverdi enigma

'Fortunately, we now have more than one recording of this astounding music which can give us a very fair idea of what an ideal performance of it might sound like'

OF all Monteverdi's works the *Popper* of 1610 is the most mysterious. It is not certain whether it represents mass celebrated as a single work or merely as an anthology of Monteverdi's range and capacity for church music. If the music was intended to constitute a single work, why are there two *Magnificats*? And why are all the pieces listed, as a kind of appendix, to the *Mass* Mass in traditional style which stands at the beginning of the published music? Dates and places of pre-Venetian performances of the music have never been established, although it seems fairly certain that all or part of the music was performed at Mantua as well as at Venice. It is, however likely, that Monteverdi put the collection together in order to arrange his chances of getting a more congenial job in Rome or Venice; his plan was successful in the long run. The *Popper* would have impressed him to the preservation of St. Mark's Venetian, as the master-musician of his age.

What we have had, that, however, we have to admit that the music itself is occasionally enigmatic, is the joint of separate Composed parts such as the *Bass*, *Soprano* and the *Aüst* entries are so overwhelming in their demand for the highest skills of vocal agility and acoustics that no transcript, say passage in the surviving manuscripts, opens up, in this regard. The use of course devices in many of the extended pieces seems curiously old-fashioned in music which is obviously intended to demonstrate Monteverdi's complex mastery of the aesthetic and technique of the early baroque. The compilation of motets and preludes, the lackadaisical willfulness of some of the part writing are unusual for a composer whose work is almost always calculated at exactly the level of complexity needed for a particular performance. Some of the music seems to assume as though it would need a far more elaborate than would likely to be available in any of the churches used by the core paper for this music.

The polished layout of the *Popper* has long invited performances and would be particularly in their approaches to it. Because it sounds like a major ecclesiastical work, something to be put alongside the Bach *Matthäus* or the *Missa* relevant, the

early arrangements and realisations of it before and after World War II made it sound too thick and grandiose. The tradition began of viewing it as a work for choral voices and to this day such bodies tried to uncover that a choral group does need the necessary additional forces to perform the work without faltering, as nature. The truth is usually the reverse. The impulse to perform the *Popper* should begin with solo voices and skilled instrumentalists. Choral resources ought to be the last and least important element to be considered. Much of the *Popper*, including many sections of the piano settings, consists of writing for concerted solo voices. The choral share in the proceedings is relatively small and is certainly not enough by itself to ensure the realisation of the work in a satisfactory manner.

It was a feature of music that then made the 1973 Adelaide Festival performance of excerpts from the *Popper* so unsatisfactory. The piano settings had obviously been thought of in the first instance as choral arrangements and the search for enough skilled soloists, vocally and instrumentally, had never come within hailing distance of success. I fear that the *Popper* is destined to be performed at an inter-denominational choral festival this year. I cannot think of any work less suitable for a large body of singers to attempt with a gathering.

We must at least give thanks to those pioneers such as Walter Goeke who established a tradition of performing the *Popper*, even if they often misrepresented them. The work is still extremely difficult to prepare for the concert hall or the festival church performance. Fortunately, we now have more than one recording of the astounding music which can give us a very fair idea of what an ideal performance of it might sound like.

The first set of the kind came out on Teldec's QASWY 9901/03, 2 discs) and offered some excellent instrumental performances on the original instruments (or faithful copies of them) specified in the score. It also offered incomparable singing from the tenor, Nigel Rogers, prime of the solos and the familiar factor of the Vienna Boys' Choir at suitable moments of the work, notably in the triple registration of

the Soprano parts *Sicut erat*, which soar with such fluid beauty above the complicated variations for instruments. The Monteverdi Choir of Hamburg left something to be desired in extension, and the clarity of the recording was below the level of many of Teldec's other recordings of Monteverdi and his contemporaries.

A more recent Decca recording of the *Popper* under the direction of John Eliot Gardiner in London, uses modern instruments for the instrumentally important parts and, therefore, achieves a much less authentic realisation of the sound world of the work. On the other hand, Gardiner's forces as a whole handle the music with far more assurance and relish, and in that respect his recording is preferable to the Teldecian version.

Another version, involving a vocal and instrumental ensemble at Lausanne under the direction of the experienced Monteverdi specialist, Michel Corley, has become available again in a Ward Record Club release (W 31933, three discs). This is unusual in offering not only the first and longest *Magnificat*, but both *Magnificats* in quite satisfactory arrangement. The recorder at the instance retains the chance of playing either in either of these parts. The decision to include both *Magnificats* justified the recording on to three discs, but the long-term nature of the discs imposes to a large extent the disadvantage of having to buy an extra record. Corley uses some traditional instruments including the wooden cor anglais of the period, but his instrumental forces are far less such or usually focused than those of the Teldecian set. His *tiorba*, *trump* and *trumpet* (sic!) certainly possess character and personality, but their more elaborate imitations do have a resemblance to the blaring of sheep. The Corley version would be very acceptable in a concert performance on disc 2, lacks the coherence of instrumental work and the quality of solo singing that we expect from discs of such music. But it does offer the extra *Magnificat*.

Up to now, the choice has been between sugar-coated and tainted cellophane from the Gardiner version and authentically copied with a certain degree of direction from the performance directed by Jürgen von Teldec. A newer version, directed by Philip Ledger for EMI (CHM 8125 2064, 2 discs) offers a happy resolution of the difficult choice. Ledger's recording, based on an edition prepared by him and David Arnold, is even more brilliant in its use of historically appropriate instruments than the Teldecian version (one pipe, for

example, the much greater subtleties and accuracy of intonation of the orchestra, even when the tempo is considerably faster, and a thoroughly vital control of rhythm, some very fine solos, and genuine flair in realising the contrasts of proportion and metre in the score. Anthony Rolfe Johnson and Robert Tear are not nearly fluent in the difficult score, yet as Nigel Rogens is for *Talismania*, but they make a better match for each other than Rogers and his second wife. Tear is inclined to growl his lines like a lion, and there is one section of the Andante柔慢地乐章 where he and Rolfe Johnson sound like a pair of dogs worrying a bone. Of their competence, however, there is no doubt, and they have some fine associates.

In *Eily Ameling* and Norma Burrows (in the two solo soprano parts), Charles Brett (baritone), Murray Hill (third tenor) and Peter Knapp and John Noble (tenors). The speed of the instrumental playing in the opening *Dance* is unconvincing, a heartbreaking when the heavier horns exceed the difficulty of playing the concert parts (indeed from the opening section for Mendelssohn's *Odeon*, but Michael Lund and Ian (Sir) Wilkes never falter. The bass and much-loved David Munro leads the Early Music Consort of London with some of the additional instrumentalists, and the choral lines are taken with the扑克牌的准确性 and with some quite characteristic ease by the choir of King's College, Cambridge.

The basis for the overall success of the

series, however, is the performing colour itself and the conducting of Ledger. On the evidence of this performance Ledger's regality at Bangal may prove to be even more distinguished than that of his predecessors, Boris God and David Williams. Although the reverberation period of the sound of some of the final chords commands that the recording was made, presumably, in King's College Chapel, the microphone techniques employed ensure that we hear the intricate detail of vocal and instrumental parts well enough. No rendering of a work as full of textual difficulties as the *Requiem* is ever likely to be wholly successful. This one comes as close to success as I can imagine happening at the moment. ■

Ray Stanley's

WHISPERS, RUMOURS & FACTS



It was the usual story when *Termination* opened in Melbourne to a fair-to-middling response. There were — lack of publicity by the Australian Elizabethan Theatre Trust, which was presenting the show. Several potential box-office successes have been passed through the trust's inefficient publicity machine. Put it this way: didn't take up the show, *The Phoenix of the Company*, with Douglas Fairhurst, Jim Stanley Holloway and David Langton, made such a hit with the blue-riband ladies of Melbourne, it could return in a few months? It's an odd coincidence Australia could see a successful production of *Sly Fox* for the current Broadway smash-hit based on Ben Jonson's *Volpone*.

Should be surprised if Jill Pilkington is not in the Australian production of *Sly Fox* by Shirley Sundstrom.

Those "doctors" Robin Nedwell and Geoffrey Denys are packing 'em in again in a play even worse than *Doctor in the House* (if that's possible). Why can't such people tour in something worth while? They would retain their self-respect, introduce new good plays to Australia, attracting new audiences who would be surprised they actually liked something they otherwise would not have seen, and then everyone all round would be happy. Why not?

Who is a young Cyril Richard? After seeing him in stage in Sydney, David Wilson, according to Joyce Greenhill, who should know as she was in *Conrad's Return* to More with Richardson. A children's show on tour which sounds interesting is *Lambert Todd in The Legend of Green Lagoon*.

Although they did poor box-office business, I've heard good things about Hunter Valley Theatre's current production of *Hedda Gabler*, *The Les Girls Show* and *Bacon: The Way Maggery Show*, both directed by John Barker. Barker is going to direct *One Perfect Agent of the Wind* of June Street, (see Quirks and Quirrels), with John Farnham in the cast. The original cast album of *The Jesters And All That Jazz* should be out soon. Underneath Lynn Curran is returning to the Melbourne stage in the MTC's production of David Rindell's *Arabs*.

Remember Barbara Angell who used to be in the *New Australian Show* on radio and in revues and musicals around Melbourne? Apparently she's taken the Arts Theatre Club in London for a summer season of Australian plays written and directed by Australians. First up is a one-woman play by Maxine Kishchuk with the lady herself, followed by a double bill by Janice Norman, Schubert and Trevor a Mervyn. Here Tonight, and later Max Angell's own *The Final Assessment*. Other members of the company are Penny Sack, Charles Penberthwait and John Treadwell. Recently I was at programmes for the South Australian Theatre Company's first three 1977 productions. To me they appear the most informative and best designed of any of the subsidised companies. Andrew Gold eight-handbills to Michael Edgley, with some chalk up his *Hot rag* in the bottom right. Gold is one who flies across Julia Blaust in one scene crossing the boards, playing Madam Rumeyva and Elizabeth Prosser in Peter Oyser's production of *The Cherry Orchard* and *The Crucible* for the Adelphi Theatre Company.

A well-known personality in Melbourne showbiz circles is branching out as an entrepreneur and trying to bring Barry Scott to Australia. Maybe Greta Neller

too. Tipped by some for future stardom is actor Tom Cawdron, said to be in the mould of Peter Finch. It must be difficult, and perhaps a little embarrassing, for a theatre director whose wife is an actress. Take Colin George, for instance, of the South Australian Theatre Company. Who'd have thought any of the other actresses around are happy about her being given the prime roles of Lady Teazle, Varys in *The Cherry Orchard* and, in August, Mrs Bradman in *As You Like It*. Poor George has his fingers and wagging in Adelaide. Overheard at a performance of *A Chorus Line*: "I simply must see the show again, Marlene. I want to see who the director chooses for his musical numbers!" ■

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Melbourne gets a break

'Victorians have been vouchsafed... two thoroughly rewarding opera experiences'



Melbourne opera-lovers have been complaining — often quite profitably — in recent years that the national opera company gives them only a cerebral *Così fan tutte*, the only prurient of a new production vouchsafed them by the Australian Opera last year was a rather amateurish re-creation of a Glyndebourne original (Janacek's *The Cunning Little Vixen*) and all five of the new AO productions last 1977 will first be seen at the Sydney Opera House.

But I can state unequivocally, on the basis of a two-night Melbourne stand-in May, that Victorians have been vouchsafed, this year, two thoroughly rewarding opera experiences that will not be available in Sydney. Both productions involved — Mozart's *Marriage of Figaro* and Beethoven's *Fidelio* — were revivals of John Copley originals, *Figaro* from 1971 and *Fidelio* from 1970, but neither was vraiment as ago-old.

Indeed, the Copley *Figaro*, which was wittily acclaimed when it first saw the light of day and had reigned on its original high standard so much that the Sydney music critics singled it off as one of the most significant music events in the city last year, was almost as good as this year's Melbourne opening as it has ever been. John Prentiss (Count Almaviva) and Ronald MacNaughton (Figaro) were both in complete form, continuing to refine their interpretations of roles they made their own long ago. Noel Whelan-Smith (Barbarina) and Barbara Hannibal (Marcellina) continue to give superb readings of these demanding supporting



roles. Robert Gauthier's Basilio, as deceptively young as ever, showed remarkable vocal improvement in the aftermath of his recent study sojourn in Germany; he is now producing by far the most pleasing sound I have ever heard from him, and it is a thorough pleasure to see him again in a character role he does so superbly. And Cynthia Johnson's Susanna — always a pleasure — was a particular delight on this occasion.

Only Nancy Gran's Countess and Jennifer Barrington's Cherubino were disappointing — the former for her anti-climax on the acting front and her occasional vocal lachrymose, particularly in her first big aria, "Pimp Arise"; the latter for her excessive overworking of the admirably hard-to-draw line between high-spirited comic acting and the sort of effusiveness clearing about that reduce Cherubino to a mere adolescent balloon. But favorable, if passing mention must be made of Melinda Samarit (the only new face in the cast), whose Barbarina was most pleasantly sung and presented.

Perhaps it was only to be expected that the *Fidelio* would be vocally good — though clearly Michael Bassompierre, who rehearsed it for Melbourne, deserves a good deal of credit for ensuring that most of the time, at any rate, the production retained its original lucidity and freshness. The big surprise, though, came on the orchestra, from whom the conductor, Peter Robertson, was able to impinge the Elizabethan Melbourne Orchestra to give nearly as good a performance as we have come to expect of all Sydney counterpart

This may sound condescending, but it is emphatically not, for it is common knowledge that the EMO has been through a very difficult period in the past year or so and has simply not been able to achieve the same general level of excellence as the Elizabethan Sydney Orchestra. It would be wrong to claim it is the equal match now of the ESO, but most of the time one is not unduly conscious of that fact. It is only when the strings lose their intensity or the woodwind enter into fits for an instant, or where some exposed vocalise demand of the score is not quite met with, that one feels marginally let down.

The opening Melbourne performance of *Fidelio* on 12 May — which was enthusiastically received by the audience — was a good deal more satisfying all round than the following night's *Péliševá* under Carlo Fratesi Collino. Largely this seemed to be an orchestral problem, for the EMO had much more trouble coping with the demands of the Beethoven score. I am not quite sure about the merits of Collino's sentimental reading of the score — in particular by exaggerating extensions in leaps between numbers, and I have never really warmed to *Péliševá* as an aural work of art, much though I love practically every note of the score. Perhaps the basic problem lies in the way of focus always on the urge of reducing its characters to dehumanised symbols in a political tract, only in the very best of performances can one really believe in the human individuality of the characters. At any rate, the whole there was compromised by the particular performance.

The orchestra playing was a good deal less effective than it had been the night before, perhaps an inevitable loss following the pinnacle of the last evening of the season, but the stage performance also seemed to be suffering from a malaise even the inspirational baton of Collino was unable to counteract. Even the possessed chorus, an robust mixture of high drama and almost caustic glee, got things wrong in performance, with titter, almost boozing, on this occasion. Only Ronald Dowd's Flautist — an electrifying one followed by a more than convincing realisation of the rest of the role — really measured up, in the final analysis, to the full potential of the rôle.

Lorraine Kennedy-Winter was dramatically wrong *Leontine* (Waldburg), but was quite startling at times recently, particularly in her big aria in the second scene. As *Pamina*, John Shirley was inclined to gobble his spoken dialogue and his singing was at its best as if he had the proverbial plum in his mouth. Beryl Purdon's *Marcellina* was

as pleasant as Georges Dorn's *Jacques*, but the only serious dramatic point of either of them being there — the loss of a mysterious amorous attachment between her and the monkish *Pedro* — was completely lost. And Martin-Sterns, doing his best to serve a far from considerable plot as he did the night before, was a reasonably unimpeached, sprawling figure of a Riccio who acted and sang very well indeed. Robert Allman was in his usual fine form at the late curtain of the opera, Dan Fernando. But finally the strong points of the *Pedro* did not altogether counterbalance its weak ones and it all added up to a distractingly uninteresting evening at the opera when *Aldine* might never to be that. Even so, it was an experience worth the hearing, and one which Sydney opera-lovers will not be able to forget this year.



The last 1971 offering of Canberra Opera, on its home ground after performances at Orange and Wagga, was a superb production of Donizetti's *Don Pasquale* that neatly foisted, as the acting inadequacies of the principals

Critics were kept to a minimum by a further example of the sort of co-announcing among regional companies that has become a welcome feature of the Australian opera scene in recent years. The moderate sets, measured out curtains so they could be rolled into place for each succeeding scene in full view of the audience, were borrowed from the Western Australian Opera Company and magnificently by costumes designed locally by Graham MacLean that fitted perfectly to add up to a visually excellent evocation of the light-hearted mood of the piece. Ross Hassell's production reinforced this mood start-right from the beginning of the overture, during which he had the principals move out the skeleton of the plot

behind a screen.

The main trouble with the Canberra *Pasquale* was that the principals, over the action got going, were not, by and large capable of living up to the admirably stringent acting demands of the piece. had they spunked enough to enhance their singing, the result would have been a dazzling success. Once again, this *Pasquale* proved that it is a good idea harder to bring off the building effectiveness of comic opera in performance, than to conceive an audience of the credibility of even the most ridiculously improbable chain of tragic events. Tragedy seems to generate its own peculiar annual standard of willing participants of dubious comedy performed at least that the most expert level is entirely prone to fail the test.

Tim Body's *Norma* lacked a measure of the cruelty that makes his character an

Sydney's Rockdale Town Hall presented *Tosca* by Jaru and *The Sorcerer* with less than the usual success we have come to expect of this company. Robert McNaught played both the title role in *The Sorcerer* and the Judge in *Tosca* by Jaru, but was not at his best in either part on opening night. Most of the other leading roles were taken by the G and S stalwarts of the suburban circuit — Robi, Danza, John Welsh, Lingua, Mary Blake, Pearce, Denully, Dawson, Beck all appeared and were never less than adequate. But Ross Phillips' production lacked conviction, and conductor Cedric Ashton was prone to rush things along recklessly instead of allowing the text and lyrics to achieve maximum impact at their own rhythm.

The other double bill, a joint effort of the School of Opera and Music Theatre at the New South Wales Conservatorium and the Australian Opera Studio, coupled little-known works by well-known composers: *Die Meistersinger*, by Bellini, and *Wise and Drowsy* and *Back* by Henze.

Die Meistersinger has a plot line that almost matches its seven derivatives of two great German comic operas combined. The *König* of *Lore* and *Don Pasquale*, though hardly has the musical or dramatic merit of either. John Germont, of the Australian Opera, played the tyrannical *König* of the piece, who also happens to be Mayor of *Feldon*. Kathleen Moles was wife, Judith Suliba his daughter, and Eddie Walker the daughter's secret lover, who won her in various disguises before finally winning her hand.

Walker and Moles also played leading roles in the Hindmarsh piece, which literally progresses forward in half-way points and then reverses itself like a bad road map when it started, especially and dramatically, Jennifer Lindfield, Colin Gill, Geoffrey Crook and Gisling, Harriet also appeared in this very long opera.

Simply staged, well if not outstandingly sung, and presented in a slightly extended backstage or mid-afternoon format, as these two works were, they have a good deal of merit both as class exercises for student opera singers and as sheer entertainment. And this particular double bill was equally welcome for the longitudinal spirit of co-operation it demonstrated between the student branch of the national opera company and the opera branch of the New South Wales Conservatorium. Such ventures should become a staple feature of the Sydney musical scene; they did, no doubt audiences would soon come to appreciate their merit and patronise them much better than they did on this occasion.

(An even more meritorious venture off the beaten track was made early in May, when the director of the CCA, Ross Hobrook, conducted two modest miniaturist pieces — *Dawn* by the Germanic Seite by Hans von Berndt and *The Emperor of Atlantis* by Nikolai Uljanin — in three performances at the recording hall of the Opera House; unfortunately, that first season coincided with my return to Melbourne and I was not able to attend.) ■

Don Pasquale: Colin Stinton and Tim Body
expressing and adorable in the firm instance as the prove herself capable of being shrewish when it suits her best to do the piece. Colin Stinton's *Malatesta*, too, did not make quite the full measure of good natural comic interest in the part. Keith Hemptons' *Pasquale* was a little too wrinkled and wry, not only of nature but also of atmosphere, and Roger Donald's *Eugenio* was a little too wooden in stage presence and vocal line to be as lovable as the scenario's here ought to be. But James McMurtry got an excellent enough result from singer and orchestra alike, overall, the evening was an enjoyable one, despite the reservations I have detailed above.

Brief rehearsal must be made too, this month, of the other recent double bills — one coupling two of the lesser known Gilbert and Sullivan pieces, the other very short works by Bartók and Hindemith.

The G and S double bill, at suburban

GUIDE

N.C.F.

CANBERRA OPERA (03 52049)

Mount and Level (Hampstead) in English
(Continuing a tour of A.C.T. primary schools,
including child participation)

See also *Canberra Theatre*

CANBERRA PLAYHOUSE (03 52049)

Marietta Mariana (18-21 July)

Marietta Theatre of Australia. Four women
and directed by Rachael Bradshaw and Anna
directed by The Company and directed by
Rachael Bradshaw (25-29 July 1)

CANBERRA THEATRE (03 22110)

Australian Ballet. *Les Patineurs*. July the 8th.
Monkeys in a Cage. To 3 July. (03 22110-3 July 1)

Beneath a Glass Ceiling (03 16 July)
Canberra Opera. *The Merry Widow* (Liberian
English). Conductor, David Colton; producer
Nina Cooke; set designer, Paul Radford;
costume, Dorothy Australian Opera. With
Lorraine Hunt, Colin Munro, Gary Willcock,
Dr Smith, Phil O'Brien

THEATRE THREE (07 42212)

Centres Repertory Society

How Does Your Garden Grow? by Jim McHugh
directed by Ross McGregor (To 16 July.)
Tango (Theatre One) (part of *Midsumma*).
Musical directed by Joyce Macfarlane (17
July & August.)

**NEW SOUTH WALES****ACTORS' COMPANY (02 2606)**

The Taming of the Shrew, by William Shakespeare,
adapted by Joseph Papp and
Romeo and Juliet (part of *Shakespeare At The Beach*), by
Tina Major. Directed by Rodney Daley
directed by Odette Lanning. In both plays
Peter Wynter, Maria Di Angelis, Kate Proctor,
Michael Ruhle, Scott Lamont, Lee Armstrong,
Alan Franklin (Playing in repertory to end of
July.)

ARTS COUNCIL OF NEW SOUTH WALES (02 56111)

The Ball in Bath (Show, from Frank Neary's
Theatre Restaurant, William Street) directed by
George Collier with Ted Moore, Lorraine
Ward, Dennis Lee, John Barter, Julie Godfrey

(Touring north coast and north west of NSW to
11 July 1)

The Berlin and the Paper Box. From Deep Dark's
Theatre Restaurant, St Leonards directed by
Corbin Collier, with Max Hughe, Jackie Hunter, Nicola Leahy, Christopher Fair
(Touring south coast, Riverina and western districts
to 31 July.)

The Safe Household And Puppet Workshop (Continuing primary schools tour of NSW's
north coast and Riverina.)

With You There (Adelaide, Melbourne and
some other Australian primary schools tour in
Sydney metropolitan area.)

Marylin Monroe directed and performed
by Michael Freeland (High schools tour of
metropolitan area, north coast and north west
to 18 July 1)

Dr Who's Madhouse Show, directed and per-
formed by Frank Colton and Jeffery Manning
(Primary schools tour of north west and north
coast to 29 July.)

Desecrating Places, chamber music transcribed
by Brian Strain (Primary schools and adult
performance in central west to 1 July.)
New England Discourse, chamber music (no
touring). Andrew Lorrai, Robert Parris,
John Lunn (Primary schools and adult perfor-
mances north coast, 4-12 July.)

AUSTRALIAN OPERA (02 9510)

Sydney Opera House (02 9510)
Opera Theatre. *Le Cid* (Castel Nuovo/Milton
Jordi) in French. 1, 8 July (evening), 13-23 July
1971, 26, 30 July (matin). Conductor, William
Redd; producer, Leo Capponi; designer,
Peter Kurstin; resident producer, Eliza
Neustadt. With Marilyn Richardson, Jennifer
Reynolds, Heather Begg or Marjorie
Dixon, Hartl Wilson, Raymond Myers,
Graeme Duer, Gordon Woodcock, Grant
O'Connor.

The Barber of Seville (Castel Nuovo) Italian. July
1971. Conductor, Leichardt. Designer, John
Collier (devised by Michael Bennett); stage
designer, Roger Hallan. With Margareta
Tengblad, Mary Hayman, John Prebble,
Paul Potts, Alan Lydon, Clifford Guest.

Don Pasquale (Castel Nuovo) 2 July (evening), 1
July, 18-20 July (matin). Conductor, Leichardt.
Designer, Peter Colman; producer, John
Collier; designer, Michael Stanislaw; costume
and Harry Weston (only matinée producer).

Die Schnecke (Castel Nuovo) Italian. 2 July (matin),
1 July, 18-20 July (matin). Conductor, Leichardt.
Designer, Peter Colman; producer, John
Collier; designer, Michael Stanislaw; costume
and Harry Weston. With Robert David, Dennis
Olson, Heather Begg, Alison Arnott, Gerald
Shantz or Graeme Duer; Robert Eastham,
Graeme Duer, Ted Murray-Soper.

Lorenzo de' Medici (Castel Nuovo) in Italian. 3 July
(continuing 5 July) (TV). Conductor, Richard
Bartlett; producer, George Gopke; designer
Kathy Lanning; resident producer, Michael
Bennett. With Jeanne Anderson, Gerald
Shantz or Graeme Duer; Barbara Eastham,
Dennis Olson, Heather Begg, Alison Arnott, Gerald
Stanislaw or Paul Ferris.

Coriolanus (Castel Nuovo) 4 July, 8 July (matin),
11, 18, 25 July, 23 July (matin). Conductor,
Russell Chisholm; producer/designer, Tom
Lamond; resident producer, Michael
Bennett. With Margareta Tengblad,
Doris Cambridge, Donald Sinden or Paul
Ferris.

Stuart Raymond Myers or Peter van der
Steek.

Snow Angel (Pizzetti) and *Pagliacci* (Leon
cavaliere) (Castel Nuovo). 16, 19, 22, 25 July (Castel
Nuovo). Conductor (various); producer, Michael Stanis-
law; designer, Diamond Supply. In *Snow
Angel*, Ross Sutherland, Rosita Kershaw,
Heather Begg, Elizabeth Fremantle, Lesley
Stanier, Cydya Johnson. In *Pagliacci* (Singer
Soprano), David Fahey, Robert Allerton, John
Freight, Dennis Rose.

AUSTRALIAN THEATRE (Newtown
(02 5611)

The Other Man, by Tennessee Williams
An Open Theatre Group production produced
by Frank Hale, directed by Bill Atkins, design-
ed by Paul Schon. With Barbara Mervil
(continuing.)

**AUSTRALIAN THEATRE FOR YOUNG
PEOPLE (02 9510)**

Twelve Chairs (Castel Nuovo) By Mikhail Co-
v. J. B. Priestley. Translated by Raymond O'Connor.
Directed by Raymond O'Connor. The Athletes,
by John Malipiggi, and Cecilia, by Richard
Tallich, both directed by John Webb, all
designed by Taylor Tissot. *Play Meep* (Castel
Nuovo) opened by the company. *Kingsmen*
on schoolboys of north west NSW to July 14 1

SYDNEY BIRDLAND (02 5620)

Wanderwelt, by Ing. Lennartsson, directed by
Peter Tracy (To 10 July.)

**BONAPARTE THEATRE RESTAURANT
(02 2225 or 2272 2264)**

Nothing and Somewhere

**BONDI PAVILION THEATRE (02 5211 or
22 8071)**
See Australian plays from the National
Playwrights Conference in repertory, with
many of the original cast members in possible
(To 16 July.)

CITY THEATRE (Newcastle (02 5771))

Boeing Boeing, by Muriel Spark, adapted
from the French by Beverly Cross, directed by
David Fisher, designed by Bill Dwyer, starring
Richard G. Sullivan with Doug Fisher, Shirley
Constance, Kate Steel, Judith Woodhull (to 21
July.)

CORPORATION OF MUSIC (02 4300)

The Second Floor (Simpson) in English. 2
July (matin). Director, Hazel Johnson, musical
director, Eric Chapman, art director, Michael
O'Kane. With Amanda Thorne or Joanie Lind-
field, John Wain or Geoffrey Elstam, Geoffrey
Crick, Jonathan Hughes, Colin Gill, Ben
Auditor, Clive Clark Ford, Gary Horne, Sylva
Clarke, David Watson.

ENSEMBLE (02 56771)

Two Men Out, by Brian and Samuel Spivack,
directed by Bryan Gordon, designed by Doug
Anderson (To 31 July.)

GENESIS (02 5619)
A Man For All Seasons, by Robert Bolt
directed and designed by Collins O'Donnell with
Michael Bates, Elizabeth Serita, Lynne Berlin,
Dennis Alford (continuing.)

HER MAJESTY'S (21 JULY)

A Chorus Line, original production conceived, choreographed and directed by Michael Bennett, co-choreographed by Bob Avian, book by James Lapine and Nicholas Dante, music by Marvin Hamlisch, lyrics by Edward Kleban, choreography and direction revisited for Australia by Stephen Lee and Jeff Blumenkrantz (To 28 January)

EXPERIMENT (22 JULY)

Flowers by William Shakespeare directed by Graham Date, with Tim Hayes, Corin Cruttwell, Peter Whittle, Charles Monks, Lucy Oldfield, Robert Konstan, Raymond O'Reilly (To 1 July)

KILLAMA'S COFFEE THEATRE (23 JULY)

Death Comes, directed by John Howell, with John Harvey, Peter Parkinson, Cheverl Phipps (Continues)

MARIAN STREET (24 JULY)

The Happy Prince by George Hopkins, directed by Alanus Donan, designed by Brian Neale, with Lynn Harwood, Mark Hinchliffe, Philip House, Marion Johns, Al Thomas, Gareth Ladd, Dennis Parker, Guy Peck (To 9 July)

Confessions, a new comedy by Alan Ayckbourn, directed by Ted Craig, designed by Brian Neale (From 15 July)

MARIONETTE THEATRE OF AUSTRALIA (25 JULY)

Revol, written and directed by Richard Bradshaw, and Mand, directed by the company and directed by Richard Bradshaw (Schoolies Week 2000, continuing)

MUSIC HALL THEATRE RESTAURANT (26 JULY)

Cast for Folly or Fresh or Foresworn, written and directed by Michael Boddy, with Alan Harvey, John Allen, Anne Soskin (Continuing)

MUSIC LOFT THEATRE RESTAURANT (27 JULY)

One Man with a Cello by Peggy Mounter and Steve Tapscott, directed by Peggy Mounter with the Tapscott Family and Lee Young (To 21 July)

The Colours Down Below, produced by Michael Orr, with Bryan Davies, W. P. Gorman, David Garside (From 22 July)

MUSICALS (28 JULY)

Rose of Free Will, by Tom Stoppard, directed by Paul Queen, designed by Andrew Miskell, with Merryl O'Neill, Helen Milner, Antonia Hindle, Dominic Scott, Ross MacPhee, Ruth McDonald, Dick May, Sean Ross (Continuing)

NIMROD (29 JULY)

Upstart Musk, wife about Worthing, by William Shakespeare, directed by John Bell, designed by Larry Barrett, with Ian Cunliffe (continuing), with Robert Asprin, Maggie Sloane, Peter Carroll, Drew Forsythe, Ivan Lewis, Deborah Kennedy, Tony Ulrich, Peter Jones, Gordon McDoogall, Dennis Scott, Tracy Shulman, Alan Tidmarsh, Anne Volden (To 29 July)

Great Expectations, by Alma de Groot, directed by Richard Wherrett (From 29 July)

Don Quixote, A Sketch of the Inquisition, by Jack Fielding, an Australian Performing Group production starring Max Gillies (From 1 July)

OLD TOTE (30 JULY)

Death Throes, Open House, The Three Sisters, by Anton Chekhov, directed by Bill Reinhold, designed by Linda Kellaway, with

Jacks Weston, Jennifer Clancy, Marianne Vaughan, Elizabeth Alexander (From 30 July)

Parade's End, Experimental Arts by Colin Friels, directed by Peter Collingwood, designed by Vicki Tsoo, with Max Hinchliffe, Steven Poston, Rob Gillies, Ben Peacock, Brian Blue, Christopher White (To 14 July)

My Fair Lady, by Patrick White, directed by Jim Sharman, designed by Bruce Turner, with Kate Higgins, Arthur Biggs, Matt Colton (From 21 July)

York Theatre Royal Open Air, Wild Oats by John Goffe, directed by Mark Ridder, designed by Anna Foote, with Angela Terry, Bobbi, Karen Berning, Anne Dagg, Getha Vanca, Richard Morris (To 26 July)

Q THIRTY-EIGHT (30 JULY)

4 Month Rule, by Peter Kalman, directed by Karen Jackson, designed by Andrew Davis, with Darren McLean, Ron Hinchliffe, Ian Hartley (To 26 July), Imaginate, Projects 1 (1 July and 30 July), Cross Current, Blackstone, 6-10 July, Murdoch Rehabilitation Court, Parramatta (To 17 July)

USC AR 5 HOLLYWOOD PALACE THEATRE & RESTAURANT (Same Show 30 JULY)

Council of the Follies, staged and choreographed by Ross Colman with Judi Comelli, Jan Hogan, Grant Penney, Fran French, Terry Malickow (To 1 July)

The Greville Service, directed by John Fullerton (From 3 July)

ROCKDALE MUNICIPAL OPERA COMPANY (30 JULY)

Midsummer Evening (Oberammergau) in English, 20, 21, 22 July, 14 July (matinée), Conductor, Colin Roberts, director and designer, Robert Herder, choreographer, Ross Harnden, with Robert Gard, Darren Martin, Judy Chan, Paula Bain, David Goldfarb, Margaret Weatherill, Peter Avery

ST JAMES SUMMERTIME PLAYHOUSE (30 JULY)

From This House, by Tim Ralfe, directed by Peter Williams, with Billie Bobo, Darren Kenward, Jo Hynes (To 1 July)

One for the Boys, Miss Arnside, by David Berresford, directed by Peter Williams, with Helen Hyman (To 1 July)

SETTLEMENT THEATRE (30 JULY)

Downton, Minister for Minnows by William Shakespeare, directed by Ned Arndt, presented by the English Department drama students (To 13 July)

SPLASHART THEATRE RESTAURANT, Kangaroo Point (30 JULY)

The Big Bang Show, presented by Hugh Hale and Bryan Brown, directed by Hugh Hale with Peter Corlett and Ross Story (Continuing)

SYDNEY OPERA HOUSE (31 JULY)

Reception Hall, The Sydney Experience, an audio-visual adventure devised by Miles Shelley (Continuing)

THEATRE BOYAL (31 JULY or 31 JULY)

Funny Girl, by Melvin Belli, directed by John Gay Campbell, designed by Pamela Robertson, with Georgia Layton, Bruce Spence, Ross Wall, Hayley Simms, Roslyn Galipeau, Lynne Murphy, John Bentham, Bruce Harisson, Gordon Glenister (To 27 July)

Seven Bells, by Marc Camilleri, adapted from the French by Beverly Cross, directed by Doug Fenton, designed by Bill Dowd, musicals Richard D'Allairac with Doug Fenton, Shirley

Connors, Ruth Steel, Judith Woodroffe (from 30 July)

WHITE HORSE HOTEL, Newtown (31 JULY)

The Julie Galler Collection, by Ross Mann, Malcolm Brannan and Patricia Kelly, designed and directed by Ian Taylor and Hugh Hale with Jennifer McDerper (Continuing)



QUEENSLAND

ARTS THEATRE (26 JULY)

The Sleeping Hour by Richard Beaman, Director and designer Jennifer Radbourne (30 June-3 July)

David Williamson and His Cat, Directed and directed by Gordon Stone (Continuing)

CAMERATA (30 JULY)

Buster by August Strindberg, Director, Shirley Lamont, Avalon Theatre (29 July-31 August)

HER MAJESTY'S (31 JULY)

Tom and Maria Festival (July)

Midway in Conflict, Presented by Australian Council Entertainment (3-9 July)

Tuesday's Takeaway by Ian Taylor, Director, Ted Craig, designer, David Brazen with Ian Dwyer and John Pearce, Presented by Australian Chamberlain Trust (12-20 July)

LA BOITE (30 JULY to 25 Aug)

Sexual Outfit by Ted Nagel, Director, Rick Balrajah, designer, Bill Haycock, with Mark Marshall, Mac Alby, Pat Thomas, Doug Anderson (2-7 July, final performances) The USA by Michael Coe

QUEENSLAND BALLET (30 JULY)

Swan Lake (Queensland) by Art Coates of Australia (Queensland) and Queensland Ballet Company

1997 Chromograph, Charles Lesser, Games out of Colour, Chromograph, Peter Densil

The Fugle, Chromograph, Grahame Welch, Le Prologue (The Rainbow), Chromograph, Angus Boggo (2nd annual), 1 July, Cairns, 11 and 12 July, Ingham, 18 July, Charters Towers 14 July, Agnes Water 19 July, Bundaberg, 24 and 25 July, Mackay/Bundaberg, 27 July, Townsville, 28 July, Gold Coast 29 July, Lismore, 30 July)

QUEENSLAND OPERA COMPANY (31 JULY)

Camille, Romance by Peter Maxwell, Producer, John Thompson, designer, James Redwood conductor, Graeme Young

Flight by Higgins (Lorraine), Professor, John Thompson, designer, James Redwood, conductor, Graeme Young, City Hall, 03 and 11 July)

QUEENSLAND THEATRE COMPANY (31 JULY)

The Best of the Aristocrats by John Powers, Director, John MacCollum, designer, Peter Costa, with Dan Crandy, David Chisholm, Douglas Hodge, Johnny Johnson, Peter Keenan, Ron Loran, Phil May, Russell Newson, Bruce Part (12 June-1 July)

In Action by George Bernard Shaw, Director Joe MacCollum, designer, Peter Costa (Open 20 July)

TWELFTH NIGHT (22 JULY)

Mr & Mrs Prodigy by George Bernard Shaw
Directed by Whalley designed by John
Catalano (21-23 July)



TAHANIA

TISSMANIAN PUPPET THEATRE (21 JULY)

Cat, Custer, Beast, Mirror (22-23 July)
Puppets Theatre, Launceston. *Woman* (24-26 July)

THEATRE ROYAL (24 JULY)

Footsteps (Australian) Marion Street Production
Gillian and Gillian's review, directed by
Tad Craig (To 18 July)
Dreamtime Ballet (23-25 July)
Tasmanian Opera Company. *Caravan* (26 July)
Directed by Michael Landberry (From 26 July)



SOUTH AUSTRALIA

ARTS THEATRE (27 JULY)

Workshop production to 2 July

FESTIVAL CENTRE (31 JULY)

Freight Theatre Australian Ballet. *Missy*
Hicks, with Dame Margot Fonteyn, Marilyn
Jones, Marjorie Rose, Gordon Beach, Alice
Aldred, Walter Ristow, Karrin Cox, Jonathan
Kelly, Gary Norman (21 July)
Spies ACT 1 Romeo and Juliet, musical by Tony
Machado. Directed Malcolm Blight (20 June-
9 July)

For Playbills see SATC

THE SAME FACTORY

The Faculty from Kafka. Director, Andy Gid.
Flinders University Drama Centre QV Building
2 July)

LITTLE THEATRE

I Am a Man Who Feels Sorry For You by John
Kaneff. Director, Andrew Riley. AUDS
Costume by E. July 1
Globe Walker Come By Eugene Ionesco. Director
Steve Brown (21-26 and 30-31 July)

O THEATRE (22-24 JULY)

The Golden Thread by Bill Munn and Wendy
Quay. Director, Bill Munn (28-30 July)

STATE OPERA (22-23 JULY and 26 JULY)

The Merchant of Venice. Australian Festival
Centre (21 July)

The Circus of Progress (Movement in
English) Conductor: Myriam Friedman, director:
Adrian Black, designer: John Cervetto. With
Linda Hanson, Garry Dwyer, Angela
Dewing, Thomas Edwards, Douglas Morris,
Peter Hemmings, Ruth Thompson, Noosa
Knight, Karen Miller, John Ward, David Hartman
(22, 23, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30 July)

SOUTH AUSTRALIA THEATRE COMPANY (31 JULY)Playhouse. *The Body in Day* by Michael Cott

and Ross Blair. Director, Colin George,
designer, Rodney Field (To 16 July). New
season opens 13 August with *Anna Get Your
Man*

SOUTH AUSTRALIA DANCE COMPANY
Country tour (22 July-13 August)**UNION HALL**

Romeo and Juliet by William Shakespeare
Directed and written by University of Adelaide
Theatre Guild Ensemble (26-27 July, 13-18 July)



VICTORIA

ALEXANDER THEATRE (30 JULY)

The Clever Deceit directed by Peter Crystal
for the Alexander Theatre Company (To 21
July)

Mr Croch directed by Peter Dyson for the
Alexander Theatre Company (From 22 July)

**AUSTRALIAN PERFORMING GROUP
(31 JULY)**

From Factory. *Front Theatre: The Avenue*
Show by John Howard directed by Carol
Parker
From Factory. *Back Theatre: The Stairs Group*
(From 31 July)

COMEDY THEATRE (30 JULY)

Scenes in Love by Richard Gordon. Produced
by Gary Van Egmond and Paul Dailey. With
Robbie Neubert and Geoffrey Curzon (To 30
July)

HFM MAJESTY'S THEATRE (30 JULY)

The Twelfth and 13th Floor A musical
reconciliation with John Doolittle, Caroline
Gibson and John O'May. Musical director,
Michael Tyrell. choreographer, Esther
Fagerberg. Design, Peter Parry. Presented by
J.C. Williamson Productions Ltd and Michael
Edgley International Pty Ltd (Commissioned)

LA MAMA (30 JULY)

Birth Anniversary Festival. (Details not
available)

LATE LATE SHOW (31 JULY)

Border Town's a Circus My Soap. directed
by Tim Robson

MELBOURNE THEATRE COMPANY (31 JULY)

Alibiwoman The Wild Duck by Henrik Ibsen,
adapted by Ray Lawler. Directed by John
Semper, set/costume designed by Richard Pinn,
costume designed by Maria Mazzetti (To 23
July)

The Merchant of Venice. Directed by John
Semper (From 24 July)

Rentell Sennet The Club by David Williamson
Directed by Maxine Frith, designed by Marian
Gustafson (25 July)

Tommy in Education Life As We Know It
Reviewed by Jonathan Hardy. The Author is
John Polson. Director, Greg Murray. Main Pro-
duction by Adrian Marshall. Directed and designed
by Robert Lowrie

Composers A. and B. Margotterell, music

PALACE BOX THEATRE (31 JULY)

Galaxy Quest In the Absence of Sagittarius
Written by Steve J. Spurrier. Narrated Theatre

production presented by Paradise Productions
(From 7 July)

PARADISE THEATRE (30 JULY)

Murder Most Foul J. D. Salter (Montreville)
Conducted: Robert Donald, director: Robin
Longue, designer: Marie Mazzetti. With Ben
Casson, Helen Macpherson, Barry Brown, Judith
Dawson, Jane Thomas, Andi Salterovich, John
Marston, Heather Newham, Jack Lane
Costumes: Constantine. Musical: of Melbourne
(To 8-9 July)

Major Marnie Presented by Michael Edgley
International Pty Ltd in association with
David Glynn (From 22 July)

SEASIDE THEATRE (30 JULY)

Surgeons and the London Prudential Ballet in
Power and Action. Presented by Michael
Edgley International Pty Ltd (21-30 July)

TOTAL THEATRE (30 JULY)

Let Me People Down A musical collection
of acts by East Village Art. Directed by Peter
Baily (presented by East Stage) (To 30 July)

WILTONIAN STATE OPERA (31 JULY)

Paper and Flowers and Thugs or The Three
Laws of Preatche Paper, by Peter Marlowe
Commissioning on schools tour (metropolitan
area) (From the Peacock Theatre)



WESTERN AUSTRALIA

OPERA THEATRE RESTAURANT (31 JULY)

My Fair Lady New Show with Jane Seymour
THE HOLE IN THE WALL (31 JULY)

Four Years in Los Angeles Director, John
Wilson (From 31 July)

Merello Tower by Alex Barro. Director, Anna
Marino (17 July-August 2011)

PLAYHOUSE (31 JULY)

Desiree's Lover by Christopher Hampton
Director, Anne Reilly (30 June-2 July)

Mr & Mrs Pigford, by Gilbert and Sullivan
A 3-1-1 P by Oldbush. Double bill presented
by Gilbert and Sullivan Society. Director, John
Wilson (28 July-1 August)

Greaseback Casting Manager: By Anna de Green
Director, Andrew Ross (3 July-23 July)

TIE

Prisoner by Brian Friel. Director, Andrew
Rees. Special Terms available for Booking
On Tour (presented) Double bills by Linda Bassett
and Peter Whelan. Director, Andrew Ross
Captain: Dorothy Samut Hopkins

TRIG (31 JULY)

31/32/33 Presented by Charles Lawrence. Presented
by Australian Stage Productions, with Tim
Rosen Taylor and Judy Nine (19 June-23
July)

WEST AUSTRALIAN BALLET (31 JULY)
Odeon Theatre. A season of classics including
Swan Lake and *Love Never Dies* by Leigh
Praeger (20-21 July)

WEST AUSTRALIAN OPERA (31 JULY)
In series for building restoration

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